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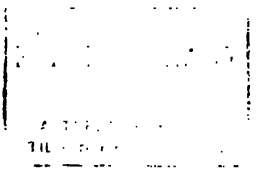

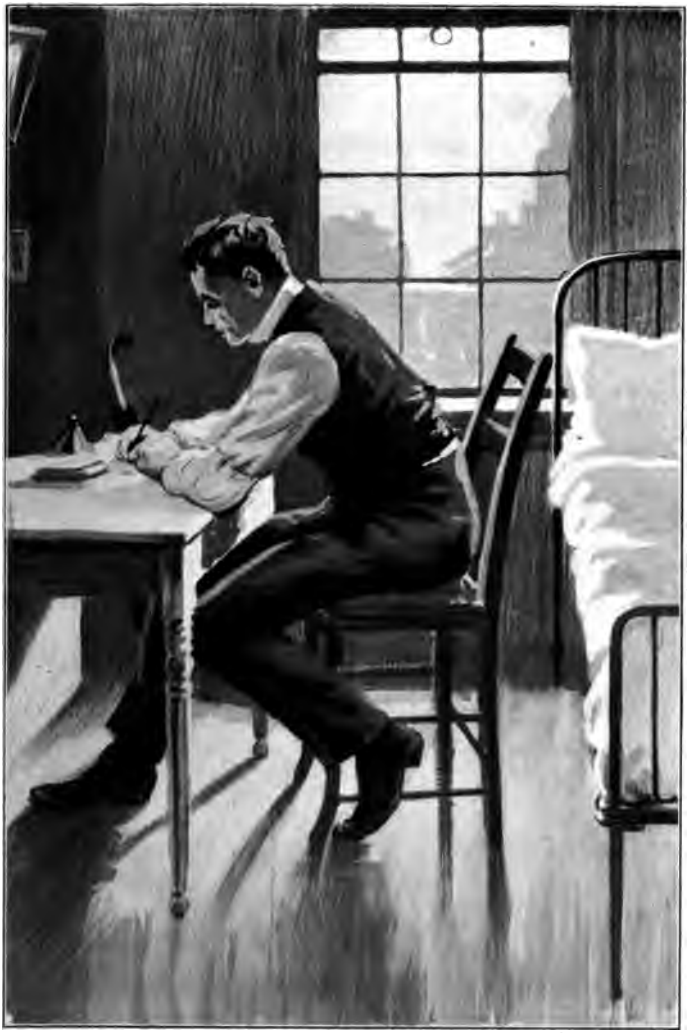

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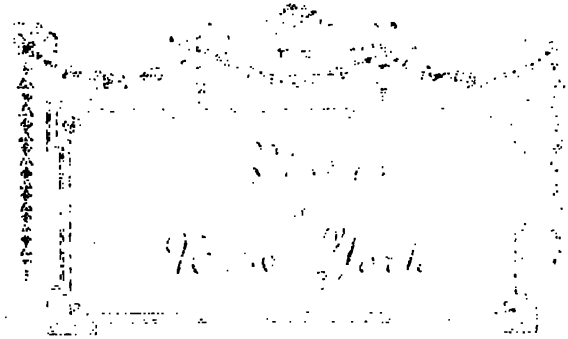
"WHAT THEY CALL THE FRONT HALL-BEDROOM"



BRANDER MATTHEWS

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NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
1912

Vistas of New York

BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

AUTHOR OF
"VIGNETTES OF MANHATTAN"
"OUTLINES IN LOCAL COLOR," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
1912

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NOTE

In one of those romances in which Hawthorne caught the color and interpreted the atmosphere of his native New England, he declared that "destiny, it may be, the most skillful of stage managers, seldom chooses to arrange its scenes and carry forward its drama without securing the presence of at least one calm observer." It is the character of this calm observer that the writer has imagined himself to be assuming in the dozen little sketches and stories garnered here into a volume. They are snapshots or flashlights of one or another of the shifting aspects of this huge and sprawling metropolis of ours.

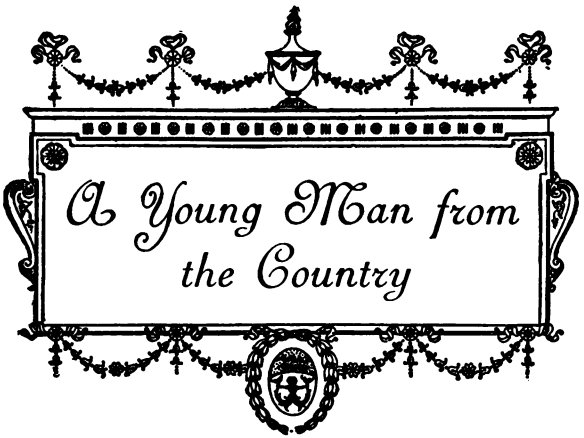
In purpose and in method these episodes and these incidents of the urban panorama are closely akin to the experiments in story-telling which were gathered a few years ago into the pair of volumes entitled *Vignettes of Manhattan* and *Outlines in Local Color*. The earliest of these stories in this third volume—replevined here from another collection long out of print—was written more than a quarter of a century ago; and the latest of them first saw the light only within the past few months. To each of the dozen sketches the date of composition has been appended as evidence that it was outlined in accord with the

actual fact at the time it came into being, even if the metropolitan kaleidoscope has revolved so rapidly that more than one of these studies from life now records what is already ancient history. The bob-tailed car, for example, is already a thing of the past; the hansom is fast following it into desuetude; and no longer is it the fashion for family parties to bicycle through Central Park in the afternoon.

Slight as these fleeting impressions may seem, this much at least may be claimed for them—that they are the result of an honest effort to catch and to fix a vision of this mighty city in which the writer has dwelt now for more than half a century.

B. M.

February 21, 1912.


A Young Man from
the Country

I

NEW YORK, Sept. 7, 1894.

MY DEAR MIRIAM,—For you are mine now, all mine, and yet not so much as you will be some day—soon, I hope. You can't guess how much bolder I feel now that you are waiting for me. And it won't be so long that you will have to wait, either, for I am going to make my way here. There's lots of young fellows come to New York from the country with no better start than I've got, and they've died millionaires. I'm in no hurry to die yet, not before I've got the million, anyway; and I'm going to get it if it can be got honestly and by hard work and by keeping my eyes open. And when I get it, I'll have you to help me spend it.

I came here all right last night, and this morning I went down to the store with your father's letter. It's an immense big building Fassiter, Smith & Kiddle keep store in. Mr. Kiddle was busy when I asked for him, but he saw me at last and he said anybody

recommended by your father was sure to be just the sort of clerk they wanted. So he turned me over to one of his assistants and he set me to work at once. As I've come from the country, he said, and know what country people want, he's put me in the department where the storekeepers get their supplies. It isn't easy to get the hang of the work, there's so much noise and confusion; but when we quit at six o'clock he said he thought I'd do. When night came I was most beat out, I don't mind telling you. It was the noise mostly, I think. I've never minded noise before, but here it is all around you all the time and you can't get away from it. Nights it isn't so bad, but it's bad enough even then. And there isn't a let-up all day. It seems as though it kept getting worse and worse; and at one time I thought there was a storm coming or something had happened. But it wasn't anything but the regular roar they have here every day, and none of the New-Yorkers noticed it, so I suppose I shall get wonted to it sooner or later.

The crowd is 'most as bad as the noise. Of course, I wasn't green enough to think that there must be a circus in town, but I came near it. Even on the side streets here there's as many people all day long as there is in Auburnvale on Main Street when the parade starts—and more, too. And they say it is just the same every day—and even at night it don't thin out much. At supper this evening I saw a piece in

the paper saying that summer was nearly over and people would soon be coming back to town. I don't know where the town is going to put them, if they do come, for it seems to me about as full now as it will hold. How they can spend so much time in the street, too, that puzzles me. My feet were tired out before I had been down-town an hour. Life is harder in the city than it is in the country, I see that already. I guess it uses up men pretty quick, and I'm glad I'm strong.

But then I've got something to keep me up to the mark; I've got a little girl up in Auburnvale who is waiting for me to make my way. If I needed to be hearted up, that would do it. I've only got to shut my eyes tight and I can see you as you stood by the door of the school-house yesterday as the cars went by. I can see you standing there, so graceful and delicate, waving your hand to me and making believe you weren't crying. I know you are ever so much too good for me; but I know, too, that if hard work will deserve you, I shall put in that, anyhow.

It is getting late now and I must go out and post this. I wish I could fold you in my arms again as I did night before last. But it won't be long before I'll come back to Auburnvale and carry you away with me.

Your own

JACK.

II

NEW YORK, Sept. 16, 1894.

DEAREST MIRIAM,—I would have written two or three days ago, but when I've had supper I'm too tired to think even. It isn't the work at the store, either. I'm getting on all right there, and I see how I can make myself useful already. I haven't been living in Auburnvale all these years with my eyes shut, and I've got an idea or two that I'm going to turn to account. No, it's just the city itself that's so tiring. It's the tramp, tramp, tramp of the people all the time, day and night, never stopping. And they are all so busy always. They go tearing through the streets with their faces set, just as if they didn't know anybody. And sometimes their mouths are working, as if they were thinking aloud. They don't waste any time; they are everlastingly doing something. For instance, I've an hour's nooning; and I go out and get my dinner in a little eating-house near the rear of our store—ten cents for a plate of roast beef; pretty thin the cut is, but the flavor is all right. Well, they read papers while they are having their dinner. They read papers in the cars coming down in the morning, and they read papers in the cars going up at night. They don't seem to take any rest. Sometimes I don't believe they sleep nights. And if they do, I don't see how they can help walking in their sleep.

I couldn't sleep myself first off, but I'm getting to now. It was the pressure of the place, the bigness of it, and the roar all round me. I'd wake up with a start, and, tired as I was, sometimes I wouldn't get to sleep again for half an hour.

I've given up the place I boarded when I first come and I've got a room all to myself in a side street just off Fourth Avenue, between Union Square and the depot. It's a little bit of a house, only fifteen feet wide, I guess. It's two stories and a half, and I've got what they call the front hall-bedroom on the top floor. It's teeny, but it's clean and it's comfortable. It's quiet, too. The lady who keeps the house is a widow. Her husband was killed in the war, at Gettysburg, and she's got a pension. She's only one daughter and no son, so she takes three of us young fellows to board. And I think I'm going to like it.

Of course, I don't want to spend any more than I have to, for I've got to have some money saved up if I ever expect to do anything for myself. And the sooner I can get started the sooner I can come back and carry away Miriam Chace—Miriam Forthright, as she will be then.

It seems a long way off, sometimes, and I don't know that it wouldn't be better to give up the idea of ever being very rich. Then we could be married just as soon as I get a raise, which I'm hoping for by New Year's, if I can show them that I am worth

it. But I'd like to be rich for your sake, Miriam—very rich, so that you could have everything you want, and more too!

Your loving

JACK.

III

NEW YORK, Sept. 24, 1894.

MY DEAR MIRIAM,—I'm glad you don't want me to give up before I get to the top. I can't see why I shouldn't succeed just as well as anybody else. You needn't think I'm weakening, either. I guess I was longing for you when I wrote that about being satisfied with what I'll have if I get my raise.

But what do you want to know about the people in this house for? The landlady's name is Janeway, and she's sixty or seventy, I don't know which. As for the daughter you're so curious about, I don't see her much. Her name's Sally—at least that's what her mother calls her. And I guess she's forty if she's a day. She don't pretty much, either. Her hair is sort of sandy, and I don't know what color eyes she has. I never knew you to take such an interest in folks before.

You ask me how I like the people here—I suppose you mean the New-Yorkers generally. Well, I guess I shall get to like them in time. They ain't as stuck up as you'd think. That sassy way of theirs don't

mean anything half the time. They just mind their own business and they haven't got time for anything else. They don't worry their heads about anybody. If you can keep up with the procession, that's all right; and they're glad to see you. If you drop out or get run over, that's all right, too; and they don't think of you again.

That's one thing I've found out already. A man's let alone in a big city—ever so much more than he is in a village. There isn't anybody watching him here; and his neighbors don't know whether it's baker's bread his wife buys or what. Fact is, in a big city a man hasn't any neighbors. He knows the boys in the store, but he don't know the man who lives next door. That's an extraordinary thing to say, isn't it? I've been in this house here for a fortnight and I don't even know the names of the folks living opposite. I don't know them by sight, and they don't know me. The man who sleeps in the next house on the other side of the wall from me—he's got a bad cold, for I can hear him cough, but that's all I know about him. And he don't know me, either. We may be getting our dinners together every day down-town and we'll never find out except by accident that we sleep side by side with only a brick or two between us. It's thinking of things like that that comes pretty near making me feel lonely sometimes; and I won't deny that there's many a night when I've wished I had only to go down street to see the welcome light

of your father's lamp—and to find Somebody Else who was glad to see me, even if she did sometimes fire up and make it hot for me just because I'd been polite to some other girl.

If you were only here you'd have such lots of sharp things to say about the sights, for there's always something going on here. Broadway beats the circus hollow. New York itself is the Greatest Show on Earth. You'd admire to see the men, all handsomed up, just as if they were going to meeting; and you'd find lots of remarks to pass about the women, dressed up like summer boarders all the time. And, of course, they are summer boarders really—New York is where the summer boarders come from. When they are up in Auburnvale they call us the Natives—down here they call us Jays. Every now and then on the street here I come across some face I seem to recognize, and when I trace it up I find it's some summer boarder that's been up in Auburnvale. Yesterday, for instance, in the car I sat opposite a girl I'd seen somewhere—a tall, handsome girl with rich golden hair. Well, I believe it was that Miss Stanwood that boarded at Taylor's last June—you know, the one you used to call the Gilt-Edged Girl.

But the people here don't faze me any more. I'm going in strong; and I guess I'll come out on top one of these fine days. And then I'll come back to Auburnvale and I'll meet a brown-haired girl with dark-brown eyes—and I'll meet her in church

and her father will marry us! Then we'll go away in the parlor-car to be New-Yorkers for the rest of our lives and to leave the Natives way behind us.

I don't know but it's thinking of that little girl with the dark-brown eyes that makes me lonelier sometimes. Here's my love to her.

Your own

JACK.

IV

NEW YORK, Oct. 7, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—You mustn't think that I'm lonely every day. I haven't time to be lonely generally. It's only now and then nights that I feel as if I'd like to have somebody to talk to about old times. But I don't understand what you mean about this Miss Stanwood. I didn't speak to her in the car that day, and I haven't seen her since. You forget that I don't know her except by sight. It was you who used to tell me about the Gilt-Edged Girl, and her fine clothes and her city ways, and all that.

This last week I've been going to the Young Men's Christian Association, where there's a fine library and a big reading-room with all sorts of papers and magazines—I never knew there were so many before. It's going to be a great convenience to me, that reading-room is, and I shall try to improve myself with the advantages I can get there. But whenever

I've read anything in a magazine that's at all good, then I want to talk it over with you as we used to do. You know so much more about books and history than I do, and you always make me see the fine side of things. I'm afraid my appreciation of the ideal needs to be cultivated. But you are a good-enough ideal for me; I found that out ages ago, and it didn't take me so very long, either. You weren't meant to teach school every winter; and it won't be so very many winters before you will be down here in New York keeping house for a junior partner in Fassiter, Smith & Kiddle—or some firm just as big.

I can write that way to you, Miriam, but I couldn't say anything like that down at the store. It isn't that they'd jeer at me, though they would, of course—because most of them haven't any ambition and just spend their money on their backs, or on the races, or anyhow. No, I haven't the confidence these New-Yorkers have. Why, I whisper to the car conductors to let me off at the corner, and I do it as quietly as I can, for I don't want them all looking at me. But a man who was brought up in the city, he just glances up from his paper and says "Twenty-third!" And probably nobody takes any notice of him, except the conductor. I wonder if I'll ever be so at home here as they are.

Even the children are different here. They have the same easy confidence, as though they'd seen everything there was to see long before they were

born. But they look worn, too, and restless, for all they take things so easy.

You ask if I've joined a church yet. Well, I haven't. I can't seem to make up my mind. I've been going twice every Sunday to hear different preachers. There's none of them with the force of your father—none of them as powerful as he is, either in prayer or in preaching. I'm going to Dr. Thurston's next Sunday; he's got some of the richest men in town in his congregation.

There must be rich men in all the churches I've been to, for they've got stained-glass windows, and singers from the opera, they say, at some of them. I haven't heard anybody sing yet whose voice is as sweet as a little girl's I know—a little bit of a girl who plays the organ and teaches in Sunday-school—and who doesn't know how much I love her.

JACK.

V

NEW YORK, Oct. 14, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—Yes, it is a great comfort to me always to get your bright letters, so full of hope and love and strength. You are grit, clear through, and I'm not half good enough for you. Your last letter came Saturday night; and that's when I like to get them, for Sunday is the only day I have time to be lonely.

I go to church in the forenoon and in the evening again; in the afternoon I've been going up to Central Park. There's a piece of woods there they call the Ramble, and I've found a seat on a cobble up over the pond. The trees are not very thrifty, but they help me to make believe I am back in Auburnvale. Sometimes I go into the big Museum there is in the Park, not a museum of curiosities, but full of pictures and statuary, ever so old some of it, and very peculiar. Then I wish for you more than ever, for that's the sort of thing you'd be interested in and know all about.

Last Sunday night I went to Dr. Thurston's church, and I thought of you as soon as the music began. I remember you said you did wish you were an organist in a Gothic church where they had a pipe-organ. Well, the organ at Dr. Thurston's would just suit you, it's so big and deep and fine. And you'd like the singing, too; it's a quartet, and the tenor is a German who came from the Berlin opera; they say he gets three thousand dollars a year just for singing on Sunday.

But I suppose it pays them to have good voices like his, for the church was crowded; and even if some of the congregation came for the music, they had to listen to Dr. Thurston's sermon afterward. And it was a very good sermon, indeed—almost as good as one of your father's, practical and chockful of common sense. And Dr. Thurston isn't afraid of talking right out in meeting, either. He was speaking

of wealth and he said it had to be paid for just like anything else, and that many a man buys his fortune at too high a price, especially if he sacrifices for it either health or character. And just in front of him sat old Ezra Pierce, one of the richest men in the city—and one of the most unscrupulous, so they say. He's worth ten or twenty millions at least; I was up in the gallery and he was in the pew just under me, so I had a good look at him. I wonder how it must feel to be as rich as all that.

And who do you suppose was in the pew just across the aisle from old Pierce? Nobody but the Gilt-Edged Girl, as you call her, that Miss Stanwood. So you see it's a small world even in a big city, and we keep meeting the same people over and over again.

I rather think I shall go to Dr. Thurston's regularly now. I like to belong to a church and not feel like a tramp every Sunday morning. Dr. Thurston is the most attractive preacher I've heard yet, and the music there is beautiful.

I don't suppose I shall ever be as rich as old Ezra Pierce, although I don't see why not, but if ever I am really rich I'll have a big house, with a great big Gothic music-room, with a pipe-organ built in one end of it. I guess I could get Some One to play on it for me when I come home evenings tired out with making money down-town. I wonder if she guesses how much I love her?

JACK.

VI

NEW YORK, Oct. 28, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—Your account of your rehearsal of the choir was very amusing. I'm glad you are having such a good time. But then you always could make a good story out of anything. You must have had a hard job managing the choir, and smoothing them down, and making them swallow their little jealousies. I wish I had half your tact. I can sell a man a bill of goods now about as well as any of the clerks in the store; but if I could rub them down gently as you handle the soprano and the contralto, I'd be taken into the firm inside of two years.

And I never wished for your tact and your skill in handling children more than I did last Sunday. I wrote you I'd made up my mind to go to Dr. Thurston's, and last Sunday he called for teachers for the Sunday-school. So I went up and they gave me a class of street boys, Italians, some of them, and Swedes. They're a tough lot, and I guess that some of them are going to drop by the wayside after the Christmas tree. I had hard work to keep order, but I made them understand who was the master before I got through. All the English they know they pick up from the gutter, I should say; and yet they want books to take home. So I told them if they behaved themselves all through the hour I'd go to the library with them to pick out a book for each of them. They

don't call it a book, either—they say, "Give me a good library, please."

And what do you suppose happened when I took them all up to the library desk? Well, I found that the librarian was the tall girl you call the Gilt-Edged. It is funny how I keep meeting her, isn't it? I was quite confused at first; but of course she didn't know me and she couldn't guess that you used to make fun of her. So she was just businesslike and helped me pick out the books for the boys.

Considering the hard times, we have been doing a big business down at the store. Two or three nights a week now I've had to stay down till ten. We get extra for this, and I don't mind the work. By degrees I'm getting an insight into the business. But there isn't any short cut to a fortune that I can see. There's lots of hard work before me and lots of waiting, too—and it's the waiting for you I mind the most.

JACK.

VII

NEW YORK, Nov. 4, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—I was beginning to wonder what the matter was when I didn't have a letter for a week and more. And now your letter has come, I don't quite make it out. You write only a page and a half; and the most of that is taken up with asking about Miss Stanwood.

Yes, I see her Sundays, of course, and she is always very pleasant. Indeed, I can't guess what it is that you have against her or why it is you are always picking at her. I feel sure that she doesn't dye her hair, but I will look at the roots as you suggest and see if it's the same color there. Her name is Hester—I've seen her write it in the library cards. Her father is very rich, they say—at least he's president of a railroad somewhere down South.

She strikes me as a sensible girl, and I think you would like her if you knew her. She has helped me to get the right kind of books into the hands of the little Italians and other foreigners I have to teach. Most Sunday-school books are very mushy, I think, and I don't believe it's a healthy moral when the good boy dies young. Miss Stanwood says that sometimes when one of my scholars takes home a book it is read by every member of the family who knows how to read, and they all talk it over. So it's very important to give them books that will help to make good Americans of them. She got her father to buy a lot of copies of lives of Washington and Franklin and Lincoln. They are not specially religious, these books, but what of it? Miss Stanwood says she thinks we must all try first of all to make men of these rough boys, to make them manly, and then they'll be worthy to be Christians. She is thinking not only of the boys themselves, but of the parents too, and of the rest of the family; and she

says that a little leaven of patriotism suggested by one of these books may work wonders. But you are quite right in saying that I'm not as lonely as I was a month ago. Of course not, for I'm getting used to the bigness of the place and the noise no longer wears on me. Besides, I've found out that the New-Yorkers are perfectly willing to be friendly. They'll meet you half-way always, not only in the church, but even down-town, too. I ain't afraid of them any more, and I can tell a conductor to let me out at the corner now without wishing to go through the floor of the car. Fact is, I've found out how little importance I am. Up at Auburnvale people knew me; I was old John Forthright's only son; I was an individual. Here in New York I am nobody at all, and everybody is perfectly willing to let me alone. I think I like it better here; and before I get through I'll force these New-Yorkers to know me when they see me in the street —just as they touch each other now and whisper when they pass old Ezra Pierce.

Write soon and tell me there's nothing the matter with you. I'm all right and I'd send you my love —but you got it all already. JACK.

VIII

NEW YORK, Nov. 16, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—I asked you to write me soon, and yet you've kept me waiting ten days again. Even

now your letter has come I can't seem to get any satisfaction out of it. I have never known you to write so stiffly. Is there anything the matter? Are you worried at home? Is your mother sick or your father?

I wish I could get away for a week at Thanksgiving to run up and see you. But we are kept pretty busy at the store. There isn't one of the firm hasn't got his nose down to the grindstone, and that's where they keep ours. That's how they've made their money; it's all good training for me, of course.

All the same I'd like to be with you this Thanksgiving, even if it isn't as beautiful a day as last Thanksgiving was. I don't know when I've enjoyed a dinner as I did your mother's that night, but I guess it wasn't the turkey I liked so much or the pumpkin pie, but the welcome I got and the sight of the girl who sat opposite to me and who wouldn't tell me what she had wished for when we pulled the wishbone. I think it was only that morning in church when I looked across and saw you at the organ that I found out I had been in love with you for a long while. You were so graceful, as you sat there and the sunlight came down on your beautiful brown hair, that I wanted to get up and go over on the spot and tell you I loved you. Then at dinner your fiery eyes seemed to burn right into me, and I wondered if you could see into my heart that was just full of love of you.

It is curious, isn't it, that I didn't get a chance to tell you all these things for nearly six months? I don't know how it was, but first one thing and then another made me put off asking you. I was afraid, too. I dreaded to have you say you didn't care for me. And you were always so independent with me. I couldn't guess what your real feelings were. Then came that day in June when I mustered up courage at last! Since then I've been a different man—a better man, I hope, too.

But I don't know why I should write you this way in answer to a letter of yours that was too short almost to be worth the postage!

JACK.

IX

NEW YORK, Dec. 2, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—You don't know how much good it did me to get your long letter last week. You wrote just like your old self—just like the dear little girl you are! I was beginning to wonder what had come over you. I thought you had changed somehow, and I couldn't understand it.

Of course, I wished I was in Auburnvale on Thanksgiving. I'd like to have seen you sitting in the seats and singing with your whole soul; and I'd have liked to hear your father preach one of his real inspiring sermons that lift up the heart of man.

To be all alone here in New York was desolate—and then it rained all the afternoon, too. It didn't seem a bit like a real Thanksgiving.

I went to church, of course, but I didn't think Dr. Thurston rose to the occasion. He didn't tell us the reasons why we ought to be grateful as strongly as your father did last year.

Coming out of church it had just begun to rain, and so there was a crowd around the doors. As I was just at the foot of the stairs I tripped over Miss Stanwood's dress. I tell you it made me uncomfortable when I heard it tear. But these New York girls have the pleasantest manners. She didn't even frown. She smiled and introduced me to her father, who seemed like a nice old gentleman. He was very friendly, too, and we stood there chatting for quite a while until the crowd thinned out.

He said that if I really wanted to understand some of the Sunday-school lessons I ought to go to the Holy Land, since there are lots of things there that haven't changed in two thousand years. He's been there and so has his daughter. He brought back ever so many photographs, and he's asked me to drop in some evening and look at them, as it may help me in making the boys see things clearly. It was very kind of him, wasn't it? I think I shall go up some night next week.

I've been here nearly three months now, and Mr. Stanwood's will be the first private house I shall

have been to—and in Auburnvale I knew everybody and every door was open to me. I feel it will be a real privilege to see what the house of a rich man like Mr. Stanwood is like. I'll write you all about it.

And some day I'll buy you a house just as fine as his. That some day seems a long way off, sometimes, don't it?

JACK.

X

NEW YORK, Dec. 4, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—You have never before answered so promptly, and so I write back the very day I get your letter.

I begin by saying I don't understand it—or at least I don't want to understand it. You ask me not to accept Mr. Stanwood's invitation. Now that's perfectly ridiculous, and you know it is. Why shouldn't I go to Mr. Stanwood's house if he asks me? He's a rich man, and very influential, and has lots of friends. He's just the kind of man it's very useful for me to know. You ought to be able to see that. I've got to take advantage of every chance I get. If I ever start in business for myself, it will be very helpful if I could find a man like Mr. Stanwood who might be willing to put in money as a special partner.

Fact is, I'm afraid you are jealous. That's what

I don't like to think. But it seems to me I can see in your letter just the kind of temper you were in last Fourth of July when I happened to get in conversation with Kitty Parsons. Your eyes flashed then and there was a burning red spot on your cheeks, and I thought I'd never seen you look so pretty. But I knew you hadn't any right to be mad clear through. And you were then, as you are now. I hadn't done anything wrong then, and I'm not going to do anything wrong now. Jealousy is absurd, anyhow, and it's doubly absurd in this case! You know how much I love you—or you ought to know it. And you ought to know that a rich man like Mr. Stanwood isn't going to ask a clerk in Fassiter, Smith & Kiddle's up to his house just on purpose to catch a husband for his daughter.

I guess I've got a pretty good opinion of myself. You told me once I was dreadfully stuck up—it was the same Fourth of July you said it, too. But I'm not conceited enough to think that a New York girl like Miss Stanwood would ever look at me. I don't trot in her class. And a railroad president isn't so hard up for a son-in-law that he has to pick one up on the church steps. So you needn't be alarmed about me.

But if it worries you I'll go some night this week and get it over. Then I'll write you all about it. I guess there's lots of things in Mr. Stanwood's house you would like to see.

So sit down and write me a nice letter soon, and get over this jealousy as quick as you can. It isn't worthy of the little girl I love so much.

Your only

JACK.

XI

NEW YORK, Dec. 9, 1894.

DEAR MIRIAM,—I haven't had a line from you since I wrote you last, but according to promise I write at once to tell you about my visit to the Stanwoods.

I went there last night. They live on the top of Murray Hill, just off Madison Avenue. It's a fine house, what they call a four-story, high-stooped, brownstone mansion. The door was opened by a man in a swallow-tail coat, and he showed me into the sitting-room, saying they hadn't quite finished dinner yet—and it was almost eight o'clock! That shows you how different things are here in New York, don't it? The sitting-room was very handsome, with satin furniture, and hand-painted pictures on the walls, and a blazing soft-coal fire. There were magazines and books on the center-table, some of them French.

In about ten minutes they came in, Mr. Stanwood and his daughter; and they begged my pardon for keeping me waiting. Then Mr. Stanwood said he was sorry but he had to attend a committee meeting

at the club. Of course, I was for going, too, but he said to Hester—that's Miss Stanwood's name; pretty, isn't it?—she'd show me the photographs. So he stayed a little while and made me feel at home and then he went.

He's a widower, and his daughter keeps house for him; but I guess housekeeping's pretty easy if you've got lots of money and don't care how fast you spend it. I felt a little awkward, I don't mind telling you, in that fine room, but Miss Stanwood never let on if she saw it, and I guess she did, for she's pretty sharp, too. She sent for the photographs; and she gave me a wholly new idea of the Holy Land, and she told me lots of things about their travels abroad. When you called her the Gilt-Edged Girl I suppose you thought she was stiff and stuck up. But she isn't—not a bit. She's bright, too, and she was very funny the way she took off the people they'd met on the other side. She isn't as good a mimic as you, perhaps, but she can be very amusing. She's very well educated, I must say; she's read everything and she's been everywhere. In London two years ago she was presented to the Queen—it was the Princess of Wales, really, but she stood for the Queen—and she isn't set up about it either.

So I had an enjoyable evening in spite of my being so uncomfortable; and when Mr. Stanwood came back and I got up to go, he asked me to come again.

Now I've told you everything, as I said I would, so that you can judge for yourself how fortunate in having made friends in a house like Mr. Stanwood's. You can't help seeing that, I'm sure.

JACK.

XII

NEW YORK, Dec. 18, 1894.

MY DEAR MIRIAM,—What is the matter with you? What have I done to offend you? You keep me waiting ten days for a letter, and then when it comes it's only four lines and it's cold and curt; and there isn't a word of love in it.

If it means you are getting tired of me and want to break off, say so right out, and I'll drop everything and go up to Auburnvale on the first train and make love to you all over again and just insist on your marrying me. You needn't think I've changed. Distance don't make any difference to me. If anybody's changed it's you. I'm just the same. I love you as much as ever I did; more, too, I guess. Why, what would I have to look forward to in life if I didn't have you?

Now, I simply can't stand the way you have been treating me.

First off I thought you might be jealous, but I knew I couldn't give you any cause for that, so I saw that wasn't it. The only thing I can think of is

that separation is a strain on you. I know it is on me, but I felt I just had to stand it. And if I could stand it when what I wanted was you, well, I guessed you could stand it when all you had to do without was *me*.

Now, I tell you what I'll do, if you say so. I'll drop everything here and give up trying. What's the use of a fortune to me if I don't have you to share it with me? Of course, I'd like to be rich some day, but that's because I want you to have money and to hold your own with the best of them. Now, you just say the word and I'll quit. I'll throw up my job with Fassiter, Smith & Kiddle, though they are going to give me a raise at New Year's. Mr. Smith told me yesterday. I'll quit and I'll go back to Auburnvale for the rest of my life. I don't care if it is only a little country village—*you* live in it, and that's enough for me. I'll clerk in the store, if I can get the job there, or I'll farm it, or I'll do anything you say. Only you must tell me plainly what it is you want. What I want most in the world is you!

JACK.

XIII

NEW YORK, Jan. 1, 1895.

DEAREST MIRIAM,—That was a sweet letter you wrote me Christmas—just the kind of letter I hope you will always write.

And so you have decided that I'm to stay here and work hard and make a fortune and you will wait for me and you won't be cold to me again. That's the way I thought you would decide; and I guess it's the decision that's best for both of us.

What sets me up, too, is your saying you may be able to come down here for a little visit. Come as soon as you can. If the friend you're going to stay with is really living up at One Hundredth Street, she's a long way off, but that won't prevent my getting up to see you as often as I can.

I shall like to show you the town and take you to see the interesting places. It will amuse me to watch the way you take things here. You'll find out that Auburnvale is a pretty small place, after you've seen New York.

Of course, you'll come to Dr. Thurston's on Sunday with me. I wonder if you wouldn't like to help in the Sunday-school library while you are in town? Mr. Stanwood's going down to Florida to see about his railroad there, and he's to take his daughter with him, so there's nobody to give out books on Sunday.

But no matter about that, so long as you come soon. You know who will be waiting for you on the platform, trying to get a sight of you again after all these months.

JACK.

XIV

NEW YORK, Feb. 22, 1895.

DEAR MIRIAM,—Do be reasonable! That's all I ask. Don't get excited about nothing! I confess I don't understand you at all. I've heard of women carrying on this way, but I thought *you* had more sense! You can't think how you distress me.

After a long month in town here, when I'd seen you as often as I could and three or four times a week most always, suddenly you break out as you did yesterday after church; and then when I go to see you this evening you've packed up and gone home.

Now, what had I done wrong yesterday? I can't see. After Sunday-school you were in the library and Miss Stanwood came in unexpectedly, just back from Florida. I introduced you to her, and she was very pleasant indeed. She wouldn't have been if she'd known how you made fun of her and called her the Gilt-Edged and all that—but then she didn't know. She was very friendly to you and said she hoped you were to be in town all winter, since Auburnvale must be so very dull. Well, it *is* dull, and you know it, so you needn't have taken offense at that. Then she said the superintendent had asked her to get up a show for the Sunday-school—a sort of magic-lantern exhibition of those photographs of the Holy Land, and she wanted to know if I wouldn't help her.

Of course, I said I would, and then you said the library was very hot and wouldn't I come out at once.

And when we got out on the street you forbid my having anything to do with the show. Now, that's what I call unreasonable; and I'm sure you will say so, too, when you've had time to think it over. And why have you run away, so that I can't talk things over with you quietly and calmly?

JACK.

XV

NEW YORK, March 3, 1895.

MY DEAR MIRIAM,—Your letter is simply absurd. You say you "don't believe in that Miss Stanwood," and you want me to promise never to speak to her again. Now you can't mean that. It is too ridiculous. I confess you puzzle me more and more. I don't pretend to understand women, but you go beyond anything I ever heard of. What you ask is unworthy of you; it's unworthy of me. It's more—it's unchristian.

But I'll do what I can to please you. Since you have taken such a violent dislike to Miss Stanwood, I'll agree not to go to her house again—although that will be very awkward if Mr. Stanwood asks me, won't it? However, I suppose I can trump up some excuse. I'll agree not to go to her house, I say; but of course, I've got to be polite to her when I meet her in the

Sunday-school—that is, unless you want me to give up the Sunday-school, too! And I've got to help in the show for the boys and girls. To give up now after I've said I would, that would make me feel as mean as pusley. Besides, that show is going to attract a great deal of attention. All the prominent people in the church are going to come to it—people you don't know, of course, but high-steppers, all of them. It wouldn't really be fair to back out now.

Now that's what I'll do. I'll meet you half-way. Since you seem to have taken such a violent dislike to Miss Stanwood, for no reason at all that I can see—excepting jealousy, and that's out of the question, of course—but since you don't like her, I'll agree not to go to her house again. But I must go on with the photographs, and I can't help passing the time of day when I meet her on Sunday in the library.

Will that satisfy you?

JACK.

XVI

NEW YORK, March 17, 1895.

DEAR MIRIAM,—It's two weeks now since I wrote you in answer to your letter saying you would break off our engagement unless I promised never to speak to Miss Stanwood again—and you have never sent me a line since. You seemed to think I cared for

her—but I don't. How could I care for any other girl, loving you as I do? Besides, even if I did care for her, I'd have to get over it now—since she is going to marry an officer in the navy. The wedding is set for next June, and then he takes her with him to Japan. For all you are so jealous of her, I think she is a nice girl and I hope she will be happy.

And I want to be happy, too—and I've been miserable ever since I got that letter of yours, so cold and so hard. I don't see how a little bit of a girl like you can hold so much temper! But I love you in spite of it, and I don't believe I'd really have you different if I could. So sit right down as soon as you get this and write me a good long letter, forgiving me for all I haven't done and saying you still love me a little bit. You do, don't you, Miriam? And if you do what's the use of our waiting ever so long? Why shouldn't we be married in June, too?

I'm getting on splendidly in the store and guess I'll get another raise soon; and even now I have enough for two, if you are willing to start in with a little flat somewhere up in Harlem. We'd have to try light housekeeping at first, maybe, and perhaps table-board somewhere. But I don't care what I eat or where I eat if only I can have you sitting at the table with me. Say you will, Miriam dear, say you will! There's no use in our putting it off and putting it off till we've both got gray hair, is there?

JACK.

XVII

NEW YORK, March 19, 1895.

DEAREST MIRIAM,—You don't know how happy your letter has made me. I felt sure you would get over your tantrums sooner or later. Now you are my own little girl again, and soon you'll be my own little wife!

But why must we put it off till June? The store closes on Decoration Day, you know, and I guess I can get the firm to let me have a day or two. So make it May 30th, won't you?—and perhaps we can take that trip to Niagara as you said you'd like to.

JACK.

(1895)

On the Steps of the
City Hall

A THIN inch of dusty snow littered the frozen grass-plots surrounding the municipal buildings, and frequent scurries of wind kept swirling it again over the concrete walks whence it had been swept. The February sun—although it was within an hour of noon—could not break through the ashen clouds that shut out the sky.

It was a depressing day, and yet there was no relaxation of energy in the men who were darting here and there eagerly, each intent on his errand, with eyes fixed on the goal and with lips set in stern determination. As Curtis Van Dyne thrust himself through the throng on the Broadway sidewalk, leaving the frowning Post-office behind him, and passing before the blithe effigy of Nathan Hale, he almost laughed aloud as it suddenly struck him how incongruous it was that a statue of a man who had gladly died for his country should be stuck there between two buildings filled with men who were looking to their country, to the nation or to the city, to provide them with a living. But he was in no mood for laughter, even saturnine; and if anything could have aroused his satire, it would have been not a graven image, but himself.

He was in the habit of having a good opinion of himself, and he clung to his habits, especially to this one. Yet he was then divided between self-pity and self-contempt. For a good reason, so it seemed to him—and he was pleased to be able to think that it was an unselfish reason—he was going to take a step he did not quite approve of. He went all over the terms of the situation again as he turned from Broadway toward the City Hall; and the pressure of circumstances as he saw them brought him again to the same conclusion. Then he resolved not to let himself be worried by his own decision; if it was for the best, then there was no sense in not making the best of it.

So intent was he on his own thought that he did not observe the expectant smile of an older man who was walking across the park in front of the City Hall, and who slackened his gait, supposing that the young lawyer would greet him.

When Van Dyne passed on unseeing, the other man waited for a second and then called, "Curtis!"

The young man had already begun to mount the steps. He turned sharply, as though any conversation would then be unwelcome, but when he saw who had hailed him he smiled cheerfully and held out his hand cordially.

"Why, Judge," he began, "I didn't know you were home again! I'm glad you are better. They

told me you might have to go away for the rest of the winter."

"That's what they told me, too," answered Judge Jerningham; "and I told them I wouldn't go. I'm paid for doing my work here, and I don't intend to shirk it. I expect to take my seat again next week."

There was a striking contrast between the two men as they stood there on the steps of the City Hall. Judge Jerningham was nearly sixty; he had a stalwart frame, almost to be called stocky; his black hair was grizzled only, and his full beard was only streaked with white. He had large, dark eyes, deep-set under cavernous brows. His clothes fitted him loosely, and, although not exactly out of style, they were not to be called modish in either cut or material. Curtis Van Dyne was full thirty years younger; he was fair and slight, and he wore a drooping mustache. He was dressed with obvious care, and his garments suited him. He looked rather like a man of fashion than like a young fellow who had his way to make at the bar.

"By the way," said the Judge, after a little pause, which gave Van Dyne time to wonder why it was that the elder man had called him—"by the way, how is your sister? I saw her in church on Sunday, and she looked a little pale and peaked, I thought."

"Oh, Martha's all right," the young man answered, briskly. "Aunt Mary attends to that."

"Do you know what struck me on Sunday as I

looked at Martha?" asked the Judge. "It was her likeness to her mother at the same age."

"Yes," Van Dyne replied, "Aunt Mary says Martha's very like mother as a girl."

"And your mother was never very hearty," pursued the Judge. "Don't you think it might be well to get the girl out of town for a little while next month? March is very hard on those whose bronchial tubes are weakened."

"I guess Martha can stand another March in New York," the young man responded. "She's all right enough. I don't say it wouldn't be good for her to go South for a few weeks, but— Well, you know I can't telephone for my steam-yacht to be brought round to the foot of Twenty-third Street, and I don't own any stock in Jekyll Island."

The Judge made no immediate answer, and again there was an awkward silence.

The younger man broke it. He held out his hand once more. "It's pleasant to see you looking so fit," he said, cordially.

The other took his hand and held it. "Curtis," he began, "it isn't any of my business, I suppose, and yet I don't know. Who is to speak if I don't?"

"Speak about what?" asked Van Dyne, as the Judge released his hand.

The elder man did not answer this question. Apparently he found it difficult to say what he wished.

"I happened to see a paragraph in the political

gossip in the *Dial* this morning," he began again; "I don't often read that sort of stuff, but your name caught my eye. It said that the organization was enlisting recruits from society as an answer to the slanderous attacks that had been made on it, and that people could see how much there was in these malignant assaults when they found the better element eager to be enrolled. And then it gave half a dozen names of men who had just joined, including yours and Jimmy Suydam's. I suppose there is no truth in it?"

"It's about as near to the truth as a newspaper ever gets, I fancy," Van Dyne answered. His color had risen a little, and his speech had become a little more precise. "I haven't joined yet, but I'm going to join this week. Pat McCann is to take us in hand, Jimmy and me; he's our district leader."

"Pat McCann!" and the Judge spoke the name with horrified contempt.

"Yes," responded the young man. "Pat McCann has taken quite a shine to Jimmy and me. He gives us the glad hand and never the marble heart."

"It's no matter about Suydam," said the Judge, with an impatient gesture; "he's a foolish young fellow and he doesn't know any better. I suppose he expects to be a colonel on the staff of the first governor they elect. But you—"

It was with a hint of bravado that Van Dyne returned: "I don't see that I'm any better than Jimmy. He hasn't committed any crime that I

know of—except the deadly sin of inheriting a fortune. And as far as that goes, I wish old man Suydam had adopted me and divided his money between us. Then I could have that steam-yacht and take Martha down to Jekyll Island next month."

The Judge hesitated again, and then he said: "Curtis, I suppose you think I have no right to speak to you about this, and perhaps I haven't. But I have known you since you were born, and I went to school with your father. We were classmates in college, and I was his best man when he married your mother. You know his record in the war, and you are proud of it, of course. He left you—you will excuse my putting it plainly?—he left you an honorable name."

"And that was about all he did leave me!" the young man returned. "I want to leave my children something more."

"If you join the organization, if you are a hail-fellow-well-met with all the Pat McCanns of the city," retorted the Judge, sternly—"if you sink to that level, you would certainly leave your children something very different from what your father left you. If you do, I doubt whether the organization will go out of its way to offer inducements to your son. It will expect to get him cheap."

The young lawyer flushed again, and then he laughed uneasily.

"You are hard on me, Judge," he said at last.

"I want you to be hard on yourself now," the older man returned. "I know you, Curtis; I know the stock you come of, and I am sure you will be hard enough on yourself—when it is too late."

"I'm not going to rob a bank, am I?" urged the younger man.

"You are going to rob yourself," was the swift answer. "You are going to rob your children, if you ever have any, of what your father left you—the priceless heritage of an honored name."

"Come, now, Judge," said Van Dyne, "is that quite fair? You speak as if I were going to enroll in the Forty Thieves."

"If I thought you capable of doing that I should not be speaking to you at all," was the reply.

"Pat McCann isn't a bad fellow really," the young man declared. "He means well enough. And the rest of them are not rascals, either; they are not the crew of pirates the papers call them. They are giving the city as good a government now as our mixed population will stand. They have their ambition to do right; and I sincerely believe that they mean to do the best they know how."

"That's it precisely," the Judge asserted. "They mean to do the best they know how. But how much do they know?"

"Well, they are not exactly fools, are they?" was the evasive answer.

"Don't misunderstand me," the elder man con-

tinued. "I am perfectly aware that the organization is not so black as it is painted. The men at the head of it are not a crew of pirates, as you say—of course not; if they were they would have been made to walk the plank long ago. Probably they mean well, as you say again. I should be sorry to believe that they do not."

"Well, then—" returned Van Dyne.

But the Judge went on, regardless of what the young lawyer was going to say:

"They may mean well, but what of it if the result is what we see? The fact is that the men at the head of the organization are of an arrested type of civilization. They are two or three hundred years behind the age. They have retained the methods—perhaps not of Claude Duval, as their enemies allege, but of Sir Robert Walpole, as their friends could not deny. Here in America to-day they are anachronisms. They stand athwart our advance. I have no wish to call them names or to think them worse than they are; but I know that association with them is not good for you or for me. It is our duty—your duty and mine, and the duty of all who have a little enlightenment—to arouse the public against these survivals of a lower stage, and to fight them incessantly, and now and then to beat them, so that they may be made to respect our views. You say they are giving the city as good a government as our mixed population will stand. Well, that may be

true; I don't think it is quite true; but even if it is, what of it? Are we to be satisfied with that? The best way to educate our mixed population to stand a better government is to fight these fellows steadily. Nothing educates them more than an election, followed by an object-lesson."

"That's all very well," responded Van Dyne, when the Judge had made an end of his long speech. "But I don't believe the organization leaders are really so far behind other people, or so much worse. They're not hypocrites, that's all. They know what they want, and they take it the easiest way they can."

"If that is the best defense you can make for them, they are worse than I thought," retorted the Judge. "Sometimes the easiest way to take what you want is to steal it."

"I don't claim that they are perfect, all of them," the younger man declared. "I suppose they are all sorts—good, bad, and indifferent. But we are all miserable sinners, you know—at least we say so every Sunday. And I have known bad men in the church."

"Come, come, Curtis," the Judge replied, "that's unworthy of you, isn't it? You would not be apologizing to me for joining the church, would you?"

Van Dyne was about to answer hastily, but he checked the words on his lips. He looked away and across the frozen park to the pushing crowd on Broadway; but he did not really see the huge wagons

rumbling in and out of Mail Street, nor did he hear the insistent clang of the cable-car.

His tone was deprecatory when he spoke at last.

"I suppose you are right," he began, "and I don't quite see myself in that company. I'll be frank, Judge, for you are an old friend, and I know you wish me well, and I'd be glad to stand well in your eyes. I don't really want to join the organization; I don't like the men in it any more than you do; and I don't know that I approve of their ways much more than you do. But I've got to do it."

"Got to?" echoed the Judge, in surprise. "Why have you got to? They can't force you to join if you don't wish it."

"I've got to do it because I've got to have money," was the young man's explanation.

"Do you mean that you are to be paid for associating with these people?" the Judge asked.

"That's about it," was the answer. "I wouldn't do it if I wasn't going to make something out of it, would I? Not that there is any bargain, of course; but Pat McCann has dropped hints, and I know how easy it will be for them to throw things my way."

"I didn't know you needed money so badly," said the Judge. "I thought you were doing well at the bar."

"I'm doing well enough, I suppose," Van Dyne explained; "but I could do better. In fact, I must do better. I must have money. There's—well,

there's Martha. She came out last fall, and I gave her a coming-out tea, of course. Well, I want her to have a good time. Mother had a good time when she was a girl, and why shouldn't Martha? She won't be nineteen again."

"Yes," said the Judge, "your mother had a good time when she was a girl. Your father and I saw to that."

"Martha's just got her first invitation to the Assembly," Van Dyne went on. "You should have seen how delighted she was, too; it did me good to see it. Mrs. Jimmy Suydam sent it to her. But all that will cost money; of course, she's got to have a new gown and gloves and flowers and a carriage and so on. I don't begrudge it to her. I'm only too glad to give it to her. But I'm in debt now for that coming-out tea and for other things. I ran behind last year, and this year I shall spend more. That's why I've got to join the organization and pick up a reference now and then, and maybe a receivership by and by; and perhaps they'll elect me to an office, sooner or later. I know I'm too young yet, but I'd like to be a judge, too."

"So it is for your sister you are selling yourself, is it?" asked the elder man. "Do you think she would be willing if she knew?"

"I'm not selling myself!" declared the young man, laughing a little nervously. "I haven't signed any compact with my own blood amid a blaze of red fire."

"Do you think your sister would approve if she knew?" persisted the Judge.

"Oh, but she won't know!" was the answer. "I'll admit she wouldn't like it overmuch. She takes after father, and she has very strict ideas. You ought to hear her talk about the corruption of our politics!"

"Curtis," said the Judge, earnestly, "if *you* take after your father, you ought to be able to look things in the face. That's what I want you to do now. Have you any right to sacrifice yourself for your sister's sake in a way she would not like?"

"I'm not sacrificing myself at all," the young man declared. "I want some of the good things of life for myself. Besides, what do girls know about politics? They are always dreamy and impracticable. If they had their noses down to the grindstone of life for a little while it would sharpen their eyes, and they would see things differently."

"It will be a sad world when women like your sister and your mother see things differently, as you put it," the elder man retorted.

"If I want more money, I don't admit that it is any of Martha's business how I make it," Van Dyne asserted. "I'll let her have the spending of some of it—that will be her duty. I want her to have a summer in Europe, too. She knows that mother was abroad a whole year when she was eighteen."

"I know that, too," said the Judge. "It was in

Venice that your father and I first met her; she was feeding the pigeons in front of St. Mark's, and—"

The Judge paused a moment, and then he laid his hand on Van Dyne's shoulder.

"Curtis," he continued, "if a thousand dollars now will help you out, or two thousand, or even five, if you need it, I shall be glad to let you have the money."

"Thank you, Judge," was the prompt reply. "I can't take your money, because I don't know how or when I could pay you back."

"What matter about that?" returned the other. "I have nobody to leave it to."

"You were my father's friend and my mother's," said Van Dyne. "I would take money from you if I could take it from anybody. But I can't do that. You wouldn't in my place, would you?"

The Judge did not answer this directly. "It is not easy to say what we should do if one were to stand in the other's place," he declared. "And if you change your mind, the money is ready for you whenever you want it."

"You are very good to me, Judge," said the young man, "and I appreciate your kindness—"

"Then don't say anything more about it," the elder man interrupted. "And you must forgive me for my plain speaking about that other matter."

"About my joining the organization?" said Van Dyne. "Well, I'll think over what you have said.

I don't want you to believe that I don't understand the kindness that prompted you to say what you did. I haven't really decided absolutely what I had best do."

"It is a decision you must make for yourself, after all," the Judge declared. "I will not urge you further."

He held out his hand once more, and the young man grasped it heartily.

"Perhaps you and Martha and 'Aunt Mary' could come and dine with me some night next week," the Judge suggested. "I should like to hear about your sister's first experience in society."

"Of course we will all come, with pleasure," said Van Dyne.

As the elder man walked away, the younger followed him with his eyes. Then he turned and went up the steps of the City Hall.

Almost at the top of the flight stood two men, who parted company as Van Dyne drew near. One of them waited for him to come up. The other started down, smiling at the young lawyer as they met, and saying: "Good morning, Mr. Van Dyne. It's rain we're going to have, I'm thinking."

"Good morning, Mr. O'Donnell," returned Van Dyne, roused from his reverie.

"There's Mr. McCann waiting to have a word with you," cried O'Donnell over his shoulder, as he passed.

The young lawyer looked up and saw the other man at the top of the steps. He wanted time to think over his conversation with Judge Jerningham, and he had no desire for a talk just then with the district leader. Perhaps he unconsciously revealed this feeling in the coolness with which he returned the other's greeting, courteous as he always was, especially toward those whom he did not consider his equal.

"It's glad I am to see you, Mr. Van Dyne," said the politician, patting the young man on the shoulder as they shook hands.

Van Dyne drew back instinctively. Never before had Pat McCann's high hat seemed so very shiny to him, or Pat McCann's fur overcoat so very furry. The big diamond in Pat McCann's shirt-front was concealed by the tightly buttoned coat; but Van Dyne knew that it was there all the same, and he detested it more than ever before.

"It's a dark morning it is," said McCann. "Will we take a little drop of something warm?"

"Thank you," returned the young lawyer, somewhat stiffly; "I never drink in the morning."

"No more do I," declared the other; "but it's a chill day this is. Well, and when are you coming round to see the boys? Terry O'Donnell and me, we was just talking about you and Mr. Suydam."

Van Dyne did not see why it should annoy him to know that he had been the subject of conversation

between Pat McCann and Terry O'Donnell, but he was instantly aware of the annoyance. If he intended to throw in his lot with these people, he must look forward to many intimacies not quite to his liking.

"Oh, you were talking about me, were you"? he said.

"We was that," continued the district leader. "We want you to meet the boys and let them know you, don't you see? We want you to give them the glad hand."

When Van Dyne had used this slang phrase to the Judge, it had seemed to him amusing; now it struck him as vulgar.

"We want you to jolly them up a bit," McCann went on. "The boys will be glad to know you better."

"Yes," was the monosyllabic response to this invitation.

The district leader looked at the young lawyer, and his manner changed.

"We'd like to get acquainted with you, Mr. Van Dyne," he said, "if you're going to be one of us."

"If I'm going to be one of you," Van Dyne repeated. "That's just the question. Am I going to be one of you?"

"I thought we had settled all that last week," cried McCann.

"I don't think I told you that I would join you," Van Dyne declared, wondering just how far he had committed himself at that last interview.

"You told me you thought you would," McCann declared.

"Oh, maybe I thought so then," Van Dyne answered.

The district leader was generally wary and tactful. Among people of his own class he was a good judge of men; and he owed his position largely to his persuasive powers. But on this occasion he made a mistake, due perhaps in some measure to his perception of the other's assumption of superiority.

"And now you don't think so?" he retorted, swiftly. "Is that what it is? Well, it's for you to say, not me. I'm not begging any man to come into the organization if they don't want. But I can't waste my time any more on them that don't want. It's for you to say the word, and it's now or never."

"Since you put it that way, Mr. McCann," said Van Dyne, "it's never."

"Then you don't want to join the organization?" asked the district leader, a little taken aback by the other's sudden change of determination.

"No," Van Dyne replied, "I don't."

And when he was left alone on the top of the City Hall steps, the young lawyer was puzzled to know whether it was Judge Jerningham or Pat McCann that had most influenced his decision.

(1898)

"Sisters
Under Their Skins"

THE light March rain, which had been intermittent all the morning, ceased falling before Minnie Henryson and her mother had reached Sixth Avenue. The keen wind sprang up again, and a patch of blue sky appeared here and there down the vista of Twenty-third Street, as they were walking westward. There was even a suggestion of sunshine far away over the Jersey hills.

The two ladies closed their umbrellas, which the west wind had made it hard for them to hold.

"I believe we are going to have a pleasant afternoon, after all," said Mrs. Henryson. "Perhaps we had better lunch down here and get all our shopping done to-day."

"Just as you say, mamma," the daughter answered, a little listlessly, accustomed to accept all her mother's sudden changes of plans.

They turned the corner and went a little way down the avenue, as the brakes of an up-town train scraped and squeaked when it stopped at the station high above their heads.

Mrs. Henryson paused to look into one of the broad windows of a gigantic store.

"Minnie," she said, solemnly, "I don't believe hats are going to be any smaller this summer, in spite of all they say in the papers."

"It doesn't seem like it," responded her daughter, perfunctorily. She had already bought her own hat for the spring, and just then her mind was wandering far afield. She was dutifully accompanying her mother for a morning's shopping, although she would rather have had the time to herself, so that she could think out the question that was puzzling her.

Her mother continued to peer into the window, comparing the hats with one another, and Minnie's attention was arrested by a little girl of eight who stopped almost at her side and stamped three times on the iron cover of an opening in the sidewalk, nearly in front of the window where the two ladies were standing. After giving this signal the child drew back; and in less than a minute the covers opened wide, and then an elevator began to rise, bringing up a middle-aged man begrimed with oil and coal-dust.

"Hello, dad," cried the child.

"Hello, kid!" he answered. "How's mother?"

"She's better," the girl answered. "Not so much pain."

"That's good," the man responded.

"An' the doctor's been, an' he says she's doin' fine," the child continued. "Maybe she can get up for good next week."

"That 'll be a sight for sore eyes, won't it, kid?" the father asked. "What you got for me to-day?"

Minnie was listening, although she was apparently gazing intently at the shop-window. Out of the corner of her eye she saw the child hand a tin dinner-pail to the man who had risen from the depths below. Then she heard the young voice particularize its contents.

"There's roast-beef sandwiches—I made 'em myself—and pie, apple pie—I got that at the bakery—and coffee."

"Coffee, eh?" said the man. "That's what I want most of all. My throat's all dried up with the dust. Guess I'd better begin on that now." He opened the dinner-pail and took a long drink out of it. "That's pretty good, that coffee. That went right to the spot!"

"I made it," the child explained, proudly.

"Did you now?" he answered. "Well, it's as good as your mother's." Then a bell rang down below; he pulled on one of the chains and the elevator began to go down slowly.

"So-long, kid," he called, as his head sank to the level of the sidewalk.

"Good-by, dad," she answered, leaning forward; "come home as early as you can. Mother 'll be so glad to see you."

The child waited until the covers had again closed over her father, and then she started away. Minnie

Henryson turned and watched her as she slipped across the avenue, avoiding the cars and the carts with the skill born of long experience.

At last Mrs. Henryson tore herself away from the window with its flamboyant head-gear. "No," she said, emphatically, "I don't believe really they're going to be any smaller."

The daughter did not answer. She was thinking of the little domestic episode she had just witnessed; and her sympathy went out to the sick woman, laid up in some dark tenement and waiting through the long hours for her husband's return. Her case was sad; and yet she had a husband and a child and a home of her own; her life was fuller than the empty existence of a girl who had nothing to do but to go shopping with her mother and to gad about to teas, with now and then a dinner or a dance or the theater. A home of her own and a husband!—what was a woman's life without them? And so it was that what Minnie had just seen tied itself at once into the subject of her thoughts as she walked silently down the avenue by the side of her mother.

The trains rattled and ground on the Elevated almost over their heads; the clouds scattered and a faint gleam of pale March sunshine at last illumined the grayness of the day. The noon-hour rush was at its height, and the sidewalks were often so thronged that mother and daughter were separated for a moment as they tried to pick their way through the crowd.

When they came to the huge department-store they were seeking, Mrs. Henryson stood inside the vestibule as though deciding on her plan of campaign.

"Minnie," she promulgated at last, "you had better try and match those ribbons, and I'll go and pick out the rug for your father."

"Shall I wait for you at the ribbon-counter?" the daughter asked.

"Just sit down, and I'll come back as soon as I can. You look a little tired this morning, anyhow."

"I'm not the least tired, I assure you—but I didn't sleep well last night," she answered, as she went with her mother to the nearest elevator.

When she was left alone, she had a little sigh of relief, as though she was glad to be able to let her thoughts run where they would without interruption. She walked slowly to the ribbon-counter in a far corner of the store, unconscious of the persons upon whom her eyes rested. She was thinking of herself and of her own future. She wondered whether that future was then hanging in the balance.

She had early discovered that she was not very pretty, although her mother was always telling her that she had a good figure; and she had reached the age of twenty-two without having had any particular attention from any man. She had begun to ask herself whether any man ever would single her out and make her interested in him and implore her to be his wife. And now in the past few months it

seemed to her as if this dream might come true. There was no doubt that Addison Wyngard had been attentive all through the winter. Other girls had noticed it, too, and had teased her about it. He had been her partner three times at the dances of the Cotillion of One Hundred. And when some of the men of that wide circle had got up the Thursday Theater Club, he had joined only after he had found out that she was going to be a member. She recalled that he had told her that he did not care for the theater, and that he was so busy he felt he had no right to go out in the evening. The managing clerk of a pushing law firm could not control his own time even after office hours; and there had been one night when he was to be her escort at the Theater Club a box of flowers had come at six o'clock, with a note explaining that unexpected business forced him to break the engagement. And the seat beside her had been vacant all the evening.

Even when she came to the ribbon-counter she did what she had to do mechanically, with her thoughts ever straying from her duty of matching widths and tints. Her mind kept escaping from the task in hand and persisted in recalling the incidents of her intimacy with him.

After she had made her purchases she took a seat at the end of the counter, which happened to be more or less deserted just then. Three shop-girls, who had gathered to gossip during the noon lull in trade,

looked at her casually as she sat down, and then went on with their own conversation, which was pitched in so shrill a key that she could not help hearing it.

"She says to him, she says, 'Willy, I'll report you every time I catch you, see?' and she's reported him three times this morning already. That ain't what a real lady ought to do, I don't think."

"Who'd she report him to?" one of the other salesladies asked.

"Twice to Mr. Maguire. Once she reported him to Mr. Smith, and he didn't take no notice. He just laughed. But Mr. Maguire, he talked to Willy somethin' fierce. And you know Willy's got to stand it, for he's got that cross old mother of his to keep; he has to get her four quarts of paralyzed milk every day, Sundays too."

Then the third of the group broke in: "Mr. Maguire tried it on me once, but I gave it to him back, straight from the shoulder. I ain't going to have him call me down; not much. I know my business, don't I? I don't need no little snip of a red-headed Irishman to tell me what to do. I was born here, I was, and I'm not taking any back talk from him, even if he has a front like the court-house!"

The second girl, whose voice was gentler, then remarked: "Well, I wouldn't be too hard on Mr. Maguire to-day. I guess he's got troubles of his own."

"What's that?" cried the first of the three, whose

voice was the sharpest. "Has Sadie Jones thrown him down again?"

"I didn't know a thing about it till this mornin', when I saw the ring on her other finger," the second saleslady explained, delighted to be the purveyor of important information. "Mazie says Sadie didn't break it off again till last night after he'd brought her back from the Lady Dazzlers' Mask and Civic. And she waited till they got into the trolley comin' home. An' he'd taken her in to supper, too."

"That's so," the third girl said, "and Mr. Maguire's takin' it terrible. He came across the street this morning just before me, and he had his skates on. I was waitin' to see him go in the mud-gutter. Then he saw the copper on the beat, and he made an awful brace. Gee, but I thought he was pinched sure!"

"Mr. Smith caught on to him," said the first, with her sharp voice, "and Willy heard him say he'd be all right again, and he had only the fill of a pitcher."

"And Sadie's going to keep the ring, too. She says she earned it trying to keep him straight," the third girl went on. "It's a dead ringer for a diamond, even if it ain't the real thing. He says it is."

Two customers came up at this juncture, and the group of salesladies had to dissolve. A series of shrill whistles came in swift succession and a fire-engine rushed down the avenue, followed by a hook-and-ladder truck; and the girl with the kindly voice

went over toward the door to look at them, leaving Minnie Henryson again to her own thoughts.

She asked herself if she was really getting interested in Addison Wyngard. And she could not answer her own question. Of course it had been very pleasant to feel that he was interested in her. And she thought he really was interested. He had told her that he did not like his position with Smyth, Mackellar & Hubbard, and a classmate at Columbia had offered him a place with a railroad company down in Texas. But he had said that he hated to give up the law and to leave New York—and all his friends. And as he said that, he looked at her. She had felt that he was implying that she was the reason why he was unwilling to go. She remembered that she had laughed lightly as she rejoined that she would feel homesick herself if she went out of sight of the Madison Square Tower. He had answered that there were other things in New York besides the Diana, things just as distant and just as unattainable. And to that she had made no response.

Then he had told her that he had another classmate in the office of the Corporation Counsel, Judge McKinley; there was a vacancy there, and his name had been suggested to the judge. She had smiled and expressed the hope that he might get the appointment. And now, as she sat there alone, with the stir and bustle of the department-store all about her, she felt certain as never before that if he did get the

place he would be assured that he had at last money enough to marry on, and that he would ask her to be his wife. If she accepted him she would have a husband and a home of her own. She would have her chance for the fuller life that can come to a woman only when she is able to fulfil her destiny.

Later he had found a chance to say that he was going to stick it out in New York a little longer—and then, if the Texas offer was still open, he'd have to take it. He had paused to hear what she would say to that. And all she had said was that Texas did seem a long way off. She had given him no encouragement; she had been polite—nothing more. If he did ever propose, and if she should refuse him, he could never reproach her for having lured him on.

Suddenly it seemed to her that this chilly attitude of hers was contemptible. The man wanted her—and for the first time she began to suspect that all the woman in her wanted him to want her. She hated herself for having been so unresponsive, so discouraging, so cold. She knew that he was a man of character and of ability, a clean man, a man his wife might be proud of. And she had looked ahead sharply and realized how desolate the Cotillion of One Hundred and the Thursday Theater Club would be for her if Addison Wyngard should go to Texas, after all. She began to fear that, if he did decide to leave New York, he would never dare to ask her to marry him.

Then she looked around her and began to wonder

what could be keeping her mother so long. She happened to see the door of the store open, as a tall girl came in with a high pompadour and an immense black hat adorned with three aggressive silver feathers.

The new-comer advanced toward the ribbon-counter, where she was greeted effusively by two of the salesladies.

"For pity's sake," cried one of them, "I ain't seen you for a month of Sundays!"

"Addie Brown!" said the other. "And you haven't been back here to see us old friends since I don't know when."

"Addie Cameron now, if you please," and the new-comer bridled a little as she gave herself her married name. "An' I was comin' in last Saturday, but I had to have my teeth fixed first, and I went to dentist after dentist and they were all full, and I was tired out."

"Well, it's Addie, any way you fix it," responded one of the salesladies, "and we're glad to see you back, even if we did think you'd shook us for keeps. Is this gettin' married all it's cracked up to be?"

"It's fine," the bride replied, "an' I wouldn't never come back here on no account. Not but what things ain't what I'd like altogether. I went to the Girls' Friendly last night, and there was that Miss Van Antwerp that runs our class, and she was so interested, for all she's one of the Four Hundred.

An' she wanted to know about Sam, an' I told her he was a good man an' none better, an' I was perfectly satisfied. 'But, Miss Van Antwerp,' I says to her, I says, 'don't you never marry a policeman—their hours are so inconvenient. You can't never tell when he's comin' home.' That's what I told her, for she's always interested."

The other two salesladies laughed, and one of them asked, "What did Miss Van Antwerp say to that?"

"She just said that she wasn't thinkin' of gettin' married, but she'd remember my advice."

"I ain't thinkin' of gettin' married, either," said one of the salesladies, the one with the gentler voice, "but I've had a dream an' it may come true. I dreamed there was a young feller, handsome he was, too, and the son of a charge customer. You've seen her, the old stiff with those furs and the big diamond ear-rings, that's so fussy always and so partic'lar, for all she belongs to the Consumers' League."

"I know who you mean; horrid old thing she is, too," interrupted the other; "but I didn't know she had a son."

"I don't know it, either," was the reply. "But that's what I dreamed—and I dreamed it three nights runnin', too. Fierce, wasn't it? An' he kept hangin' round and wantin' to make a date to take me to the opera. Said he could talk French an' he'd tell me what it was all about. An'—"

Just then the floor-walker called "Forward!" as

a customer came to the other end of the counter; and the girl with the gentle voice moved away.

Minnie Henryson wondered whether this floor-walker was Mr. Maguire or Mr. Smith. Under the suggestion of his stare, whichever he was, Addie Cameron and the other shop-girl moved away toward the door, and the rest of their conversation was lost to the listener.

She did not know how long she continued to sit there, while customers loitered before the ribbon-counter and fingered the stock and asked questions. She heard the fire-engines come slowly back; and above the murmur which arose all over the store she caught again the harsh grinding of the brakes on the Elevated in the avenue. Then she rose, as she saw her mother looking for her.

"I didn't mean to keep you waiting so long," Mrs. Henryson explained; "but I couldn't seem to find just the rug I wanted for your father. You know he's always satisfied with anything, so I have to be particular to get something he'll really like. And then I met Mrs. McKinley, and we had to have a little chat."

Minnie looked at her mother. She had forgotten that the wife of the Corporation Counsel was a friend of her mother's; and she wondered whether she could get her mother to say a good word for Addison Wyngard.

Mother and daughter threaded their way through

the swarm of shoppers toward the door of the store.

"By the way, Minnie," said her mother, just as they came to the entrance, "didn't you tell me that young Mr. Wyngard sat next you at the theater the other night at that Thursday Club of yours? That's his name, isn't it?"

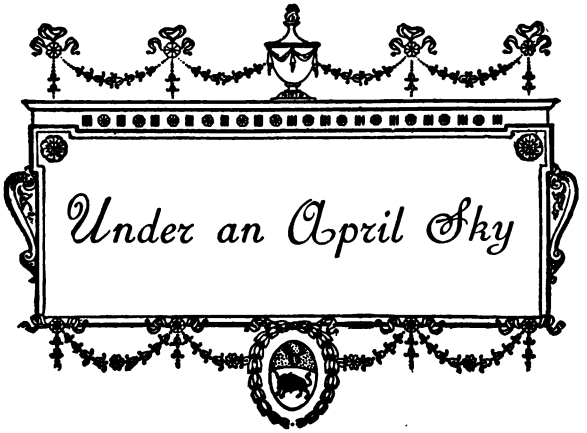
"Mr. Wyngard did sit next to me one evening," the daughter answered, not looking up.

"Well, Mrs. McKinley saw you, and so did the Judge. He says that this young Wyngard is a clever lawyer—and he's going to take him into his office."

And then they passed out into the avenue flooded with spring sunshine.

Minnie took a long breath of fresh air and she raised her head. It seemed to her almost as though she could already feel a new ring on the third finger of her left hand.

(1910)


Under an April Sky

THE swirling rain bespattered the window as the fitful April wind changed about; and the lonely woman, staring vacantly upon the plumes of steam waving from the roofs below her, saw them violently twisted and broken and scattered. The new hotel towered high above all the neighboring buildings, and she could look down on the private houses that filled block after block, until the next tall edifice rose abruptly into view half a mile to the northward. Through the drizzle the prospect seemed to her drearier than ever, and the ugly monotony of it weighed on her like a nightmare. With an impatient sigh she turned from the window, but as her eye traveled around the walls she saw nothing that might relieve her melancholy.

It was not a large room, this private parlor on an upper story of the immense hotel; and its decorations, its ornaments, its furniture, its carpets, had the characterless commonplace befitting an apartment which might have a score of occupants in a single month. Yet she had spent the most of the winter in it; those were her pretty cushions (on the hard sofa), and that was her tea equipage on the low table

by the fireplace (with its gas-log). The photographs in their silver frames were hers also, and so were the violets that filled a Rookwood bowl on the top of the writing-desk near the window. But as she glanced about in search of something that might make her feel at home, she found nothing to satisfy her longing. The room was a room in a hotel, after all; and she had failed wholly to impress her own individuality upon it. To recall her vain efforts only intensified her loneliness.

The hotel was full, so they said, and it held a thousand souls and more; and as she walked aimlessly to and fro within her narrow space, she wondered whether any one of the thousand felt as detached and as solitary as she did then—as she had felt so often during the long winter. She paused at the window again, and gazed at the houses far down below her on the other side of the narrow street; they were at least homes, and the women who dwelt there had husbands or sons or fathers—had each of them a man of some sort for her to lean on, for her to cling to, for her to love, for her to devote herself to, and for her to sacrifice herself for.

Sometimes she had delighted in the loftiness of her position, lifted high in air; she had fancied almost that she was on another plane from the people in the thick of the struggle down below. Now as she pressed her forehead against the chill pane and peered down to watch the umbrellas that crawled here and

there on the sidewalk, more than a hundred feet beneath her, she had a fleeting vision of her own mangled body lying down there on the stones, if she should ever yield to the temptation that came to her in these moments of depression. She shuddered at the sight, and turned away impetuously, while the rain again rattled against the window, as though demanding instant admission.

An observer would have declared that this woman, weary as she might be with solitude, was far too young for life already to have lost its savor. Her figure was slight and girlish yet. Her walk was brisk and youthful. Her thick, brown hair was abundant, and untouched by gray. Her dark-brown eyes kept their freshness still, although they were older than they might seem at first. She was perhaps a scant thirty years of age, although it might well be that she was three or four years younger. No doubt the observer would have found her ill at ease and restless, as though making ready for an ordeal that she was anxious to pass through as soon as possible.

The clock on the mantelpiece began to strike, and she looked up eagerly; but when she saw that it was only three, she turned away petulantly, almost like a spoiled child who cannot bear to wait.

Her eye fell on the desk with an unfinished letter lying on it. With her usual impulsive swiftness she

sat herself down and hastily ran over what she had written.

"Dear Margaret," the letter began, "it was a surprise, of course, to hear from you again, for it must be three or four years since last we corresponded. But your kindly inquiries were very welcome, and it did me good to feel that there was a woman really interested in me, even though she was thousands of miles away. It is with a glow of gratitude that I think of you and your goodness to me when I was suddenly widowed. You took pity on my loneliness then, and you can't guess how often I have longed for a friend like you in these last years of bitter solitude—a friend I could go to for sympathy, a friend I could unburden my heart to."

Having read this almost at a glance, she seized her pen and continued:

"I feel as if I simply must talk out to somebody—and so I'm going to write to you, sure you will not misunderstand me, for your insight and your perceptions were always as kindly as they were keen.

"You ask me what I am going to do. And I answer you frankly. I am going to marry a man I don't love—and who doesn't love me. So we shall swindle each other!

"I can see your shocked look as you read this—but you don't know what has brought me to it. I've come to the end of my tether at last. My money has nearly all gone. I don't know how I can support

myself—and so I'm going to let somebody support me, that's all!

"The settlement of poor George's affairs has dragged along all these years, and it was only last December that I got the few hundred dollars that were coming to me. I took the cash and I came here to New York to see if something wouldn't turn up. What—well, I didn't know and I didn't care. I just hoped that the luck might change at last—and perhaps I did dream of a Prince Charming at the end of the perspective; not a mere boy, of course, not the pretty little puppet Cinderella married, but a Prince Charming of middle age, with his hair dashed with gray at the temples, a man of position and sound judgment and good taste, who might still find his ideal in a thin little widow like me. Of course the dream hasn't come true; it's only the nightmares that are realized. I haven't seen any Prince Charmings, either pretty little puppets or mature men of the world. I guess the race is extinct, like the dodo. At any rate, nothing has turned up, and the winter is over, and my money is nearly all gone.

"But I don't regret the past few months. New York is very interesting, and I'd dearly love to talk it over with you. It is a sort of a stock-pot; everything goes in—good meat, and bones, and scraps of all sorts—and you never know just what the flavor will be like, but it's sure to be rich and stimulating and unexpected. I've been to very exclusive houses

here sometimes, and I enjoyed that immensely; I think I could learn easily to live up to any income, no matter how big it was. I've been mostly in the society absurdly called the Four Hundred; it used to be called the Upper Ten Thousand; there are pleasant men and women there, and dull ones too, just as there are everywhere else, I suppose. And I've even gone a little into artistic and literary circles—but I don't really like untidy people.

"You see, I am here at the newest and swellest hotel. It's true I have only a tiny little parlor and a teeny little bedroom, 'way up near the top of the house, with a room in the attic somewhere for my maid Jemima—you remember Jemima? Well, she's watching over me still, and she's the only real friend I have in all New York! She'd give me all her savings gladly if I was mean enough to take them; but I couldn't live on that pittance, could I?

"I brought very good letters, and I had very good advice from an old maid who knew George's father when he was a boy—Miss Marlenspuyk; dear old soul she is. Then, as it happened, somebody remembered that poor George had been interested in that strike in Grass Valley, and had received one-third of the stock when the Belinda and the Lone Star were consolidated. I've got that stock still, and I could paper a house with it—if I had one. At any rate, somebody started the story that I was immensely rich, and of course I didn't contradict it.

I hope I've too much tact to refuse any help that chance throws in my way. I don't know whether it was the reported wealth, or the excellent letters I brought, or Miss Marlenspuyk's good advice, or even my own personal attractiveness—but, whatever the cause, I just walked into Society here almost without an effort; so easily, indeed, that the social strugglers who have seen doors open wide for me where they have been knocking in vain for years—well, they are mad enough to die! It's enough to make us despise ourselves even more than we do when we see the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth there is among the outsiders who are peeking over the barbed-wire fence of Society! I'm afraid I've been horrid enough to get a good deal of satisfaction out of the envy of those outside the pale.

"And I've enjoyed the thing for its own sake, too. I like to give a little dinner here to a woman from whom I expect favors and to a couple of agreeable men. I like to go to other people's dinners, and to a ball now and then. Why is it I haven't really the half-million or more that they think I have? I'm sure I could spend it better than most of those I know who have it. As it is, I've about enough money left in the bank at the corner to carry me another month—and then? And then I wonder sometimes whether I hadn't better take the last half-dollar for a poison of some sort—painless, of course. Jemima would see

me decently buried. But of course I sha'n't do anything of the sort; I'm too big a coward!

"And the winter has almost gone, and nothing has turned up. Oh yes, I forgot—poor George's brother, who doesn't like me, and never did; he knows how poor I am, and he wouldn't give me a dollar out of his own pocket. But he wrote me last week, asking if I would like a place as matron in a girl's boarding-school in Milwaukee. Of course I haven't answered him! I don't exactly see myself as a matron. What a hideous word it is!

"*Mais il faut faire un fin*, and my end is matrimony, I suppose. There's a man here called Stone; he's a lieutenant-commander in the navy, and I think he's going to ask me to marry him—and I'm going to accept the proposal promptly!

"He's not the mature Prince Charming of my dreams, but he is really not ill-looking. He's a manly fellow, and I confess I thought he was rather nice, until I discovered that he was after me for my money—which was a shock to my vanity, too. Little Mat Hitchcock—you must remember that withered little old beau? Well, he is still extant, and as detestable as ever; he told me that John Stone had proposed to half the wealthy girls in New York. Of course, I don't believe that, but I thought it was very suspicious when he took me in to dinner a month ago and tried to question me about my stock in the Belinda and Lone Star. I told him I had the stock

—and I have, indeed!—and I let him believe that it was worth anything you please. It wasn't what I said, of course, for I was careful not to commit myself; but I guess he got the right impression. And since then he has been very attentive; so it must be the money he is after and not me. I rather liked him, till I began to suspect; and even now I find it hard to have the thorough contempt I ought to have for a fortune-hunter.

"Why is it that we think a man despicable who marries for money, and yet it is what we expect a woman to do? I've asked Miss Marlenspuyk about Mr. Stone, and she knows all about him, as she does about everybody else. She says he has three or four or five thousand dollars a year besides his pay—and yet he wants to marry me for my money! It will just serve him right if I marry him for his. He's at the Brooklyn Navy-Yard for a few months more, and then his shore duty will be up; so that if we are married, he'll be ordered to sea soon, and I shall be free from him for three years. When I write like that I don't know whether I have a greater contempt for him or for myself. *Mais il faut vivre, n'est-ce pas?* And what am I to live on next month? I can't be a matron in Milwaukee, can I? The world owes me a living, after all, and I've simply got to collect the debt from a man. And how I hate myself for doing it!

"He sent me flowers this morning—a big bunch of violets—and of course he will come in this after-

noon to get thanked. If I am engaged before dinner I'll put in a postscript to tell you—so that you can get your wedding-present ready!"

As she wrote this last sentence she gave a hard little laugh.

Then she heard a brisk rattle from the telephone-box near the door.

She dropped her pen and went across the room and put the receiver to her ear.

"Yes—I'm Mrs. Randolph," she said. "Yes—I'm at home. Yes. Have Mr. Stone shown up to my parlor."

Then she replaced the receiver and stood for a moment in thought. She went back to the desk and closed her portfolio, with the unfinished letter inside. She changed the position of the bowl of violets and brought it into the full light. She glanced about the room to see if it was in order; and she crossed to the fireplace and looked at herself in the mirror above.

"I do wish I had slept better last night," she said to herself. "I always show it so round the eyes."

She crossed swiftly to the door which opened into the next room.

"Jemima!" she called.

"Yes, Miss Evelyn," responded a voice from within.

"Mr. Stone is coming up—and my hair is all wrong. I simply must do it over. You tell him I'll be here in a minute."

"Yes, Miss Evelyn," was the answer.

"And after Mr. Stone comes you get the water ready for the tea," said Mrs. Randolph, as she went into the bedroom. "Be sure that you have a fresh lemon. The last time Mr. Stone was here his slice was all dried up—and men don't like that sort of thing."

A minute or two after she had disappeared there was a rap at the door, and Jemima came from the bedroom and admitted Mr. Stone. She told him that Mrs. Randolph would see him at once, and then she went back to her mistress, after giving him a curiously inquisitive look.

Mr. Stone had the walk of a sailor, but he carried himself like a soldier. His eyes were blue and penetrating; his ashen mustache curled over a firm mouth; his clean-shaven chin was square and resolute.

He stood near the door for a moment, and then he went toward the window. The rain had dwindled, and as he looked out he thought he saw a break in the clouds.

It was full five minutes before Mrs. Randolph returned.

"Oh, Mr. Stone," she began, in voluble apology, "it's a shame to keep you waiting so, but honestly I couldn't help it. You took me by surprise so, I really wasn't fit to be seen!"

Mr. Stone gallantly expressed a doubt as to this last statement of hers.

"It's very good of you to think that," she responded, "but I hardly hoped to see any one this afternoon, in this awful weather. How did you ever have the courage to venture out? It's so kind of you to come and visit a lonely woman, for it has been such a long day!"

Mr. Stone informed her that it looked as though it was about to clear up.

"Of course you sailors have to know all about the weather, don't you?" she replied. "That's the advantage of being a man—you can do things. Now a woman can't do anything—she can't even go out in the rain for fear of getting her skirts wet!"

In her own ears her voice did not ring quite true. She knew that her liveliness was a little factitious. She wondered whether he had detected it. She looked up at him, and found that he was gazing full at her. She had never before recognized how clear his eyes were and how piercing.

"I haven't thanked you yet for those lovely violets," she began again, hastily. "They are exquisite! But then you have always such good taste in flowers. They have made the day less dreary for me—really they have. They were company in my loneliness."

He looked at her in surprise. "You lonely?" he asked. "How can that be?"

"Why not?" she returned.

"You have made yourself a home here," he answered, looking about the room. "You have hosts

of friends in New York. Whenever I see you in society you are surrounded by admirers. How can you be lonely?"

She was about to make an impetuous reply, but she checked herself.

"I am not really a New-Yorker, you know," she said at last. "I am a stranger in a strange city. You don't know what that means."

"I think I do," he responded. "The city is even stranger to me than it can be to you."

"I doubt it," she responded.

"I was once at sea alone in an open boat for three days," he went on, "and—it must seem absurd to you, very absurd, I suppose—but I was not as lonely as I am, now and then, in the midst of the millions of people here in New York."

"So you have felt that way too, have you?" she asked. "You have been overwhelmed by the immensity of the metropolis? You have known what it is to sink into the multitude, knowing that nobody cares who you are, or where you are going, or what you are doing, or what hopes and desires and dreams fill your head? You have found out that it is only in a great city that one can be really isolated—for in a village nobody is ever allowed to be alone. But in a human whirlpool like this you can be sucked down to death and nobody will answer your outcry."

He gave her another of his penetrating glances.

"It surprises me that you can have such feelings—or even that you can know what such feelings are," he said, "you who lead so brilliant a life, with dinners every day, and parties, and—"

"Yes," she interrupted, with a hard little laugh, "but I have been lonely even at a dinner of twenty-four. I go to all these things, as you say—I've had my share of gaiety this winter, I'll admit—and then I come back here to this hideous hotel, where I don't know a single soul. Why, I haven't a real friend—not what I call a *friend*—in all New York."

She saw that he had listened to her as though somewhat surprised, not only by what she was saying, but also by the tone in which she said it. She observed that her last remark struck him as offering an opening for the proposal which she felt certain he had come to make that afternoon.

"You must not say that, Mrs. Randolph," he began. "Surely you know that I—"

Then he broke off suddenly as the door of the next room opened and Jemima entered with a tray in her hands.

"You will let me give you a cup of tea, won't you?" the widow asked, as Jemima poured out the steaming water.

"Thank you," the sailor answered. "Your tea is always delicious."

Jemima lighted the lamp under the silver kettle. Then she left the room, silently, and Stone was about

to take up the conversation where she had interrupted it, when she came back with a plate of thin bread-and-butter, and a little glass dish with slices of lemon.

He checked himself again, not wanting to talk before the servant. Jemima stole a curious glance at him, as though wondering what manner of man he was. Then she turned down the flame of the little lamp and left the room.

Mrs. Randolph was glad that the conversation had been interrupted at that point. She had made up her mind to accept Stone's offer when he should ask her to marry him, but her immediate impulse was to procrastinate. She did not doubt that he would propose before he left her that afternoon, and yet she wanted to keep him at arm's-length as long as she could. There were imperative reasons, she thought, why she should marry him; but she knew she would bitterly regret having to give up her liberty—having to surrender the control of herself.

"You don't take sugar, I remember," she said, as she poured out his cup of tea. "And only one slice of lemon, isn't it?"

"Only one," he answered, as he took the cup. "Thank you."

There was a change of tone in his voice, and she knew that it was hopeless for her to try to postpone what he had to say. But she could not help making the effort.

"I'm so glad you like this tea," she said, hastily.

"It is part of a chest Miss Marlenspuyk had sent to her from Japan, and she let me have two or three pounds. Wasn't it nice of her?"

But the attempt failed. The sailor had gulped his tea, and now he set the cup down.

"Mrs. Randolph—" he began, with a break in his voice.

"Mr. Stone!" she answered, laughingly; "that's a solemn way of addressing me, isn't it? At least it's serious, if it isn't solemn."

"Mrs. Randolph," he repeated, "what I have to say is serious—very serious to me, at least."

Then she knew that it was idle to try to delay matters. She drew a long breath and responded as lightly as she could:

"Yes?"

"I hope I am not going to take you by surprise, Mrs. Randolph," he went on. "You are so bright and so quick that you must have seen that I admired you."

He waited for her response, and she was forced to say something. Even though the man was trying to marry her for the money he thought she had, he was at least exhibiting a most becoming ardor.

"Well," she declared, "I didn't suppose you were very much bored in my society."

"I have never before seen a woman in whose society I have taken so much pleasure," he answered. "You cannot imagine how great a joy it has been for

me to know you, and how much I have enjoyed the privilege of coming to see you here in your charming home."

She glanced at the commonplace parlor of the hotel she hated, but she said nothing.

"You spoke just now of loneliness," he continued. "I hope you don't know what that really is—at least that you don't know it as I know it. But if you have felt it at all, I shall have the less hesitation in asking if you—if you are willing to consider what it would mean to me if you could put an end to my loneliness."

"Mr. Stone!" she said, as she dropped her eyes.

"It is not your beauty alone that has drawn me to you," he urged, "not your charm, although I have felt that from the first day I met you. No; it is more than that, I think—it is your goodness, your gentleness, your kindness, your womanliness. I don't know how to find words for what I want to say, but you must know what I mean. I mean that I love you, and I beg you to be my wife."

"This is very sudden, Mr. Stone," she replied.

"Is it?" he asked, honestly. "I thought everybody must have seen how I felt toward you."

"Oh, I supposed you liked me a little," she went on.

"I love you with all my heart," he said, and she wondered at the sincerity with which he said it. She wished she had never heard that little Mat Hitchcock talk against him.

"Of course, I can't expect that you should love

me all at once," he continued; "no; that's too much to hope. But if you only like me a little now, and if you will only let me love you, I shall be satisfied." And he leaned forward and took her hand.

"I do like you, Mr. Stone," she forced herself to answer. She thrilled a little at his fervor, doubtful as she was as to the reason for his wooing. And as his eyes were fixed on her she thought that she had never before done justice to his looks. He was a strong figure of a man. His mouth was masterful; but the woman who yielded herself to him was likely to have a satisfactory defender.

"Well," he asked, when she said nothing, "is it to be yes or no?" And his voice trembled.

"Will you be satisfied if I do not say 'no'—even if I do not say 'yes,' all at once?" she returned.

"I shall have to be, I suppose," he answered, and there was a ring of triumph in his voice. "But I shall never let go of you till I get you to say 'yes.'" And he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it.

She made no resistance; she would have made none had he clasped her in his arms; she was even a little surprised that he did not. She was irritatingly conscious that his warmth was not displeasing to her—that she seemed not to resent his making love to her although she suspected him of a base motive.

For a moment or more nothing was said. He still held her hand firmly clasped in his.

At last he spoke: "You have granted me so much

that I have no right to ask for more. But I have not a great deal of time now to persuade you to marry me. Some day this summer I expect to be ordered to sea again—some day in July or August; and I want to have you for my wife before I go."

"Oh, Mr. Stone," she cried, "that is very soon!"

"Can't you call me John?" he asked, following up his advantage. "Can't I call you Evelyn?"

She smiled, and did not deny him, and he kissed her hand again. He kept hold of it now as though he felt sure of it. She acknowledged to herself that he was making progress.

They talked for a while about his term of sea service. He thought that he might be assigned to the Mediterranean squadron, and, if he were, she could come to Europe to him and spend the next winter at Villefranche. Then they discussed travel in France and in Italy, and the places they had visited.

With her delicate feminine perceptions she soon discovered that there was something he wished to say but did not know how to lead up to. Curious to learn what this might be, she let the conversation drop, so that he could make a fresh start in his blunt fashion.

Finally he came to the point. "Evelyn," he began, abruptly, "do you know the Pixleys in San Francisco —Tom Pixley, I mean?"

"I think I have met him," she answered, wondering what this might lead to.

"He is an old friend of mine," Stone continued. "He was here a fortnight ago, and I had a long talk with him. He knows all about those Grass Valley mines."

She smiled a little bitterly and withdrew her hand. She thought that perhaps the stock was worth more than she had supposed, and that Stone had been told so by Pixley. All her contempt for a man who could marry a woman for money rose hot within her.

"Does he?" she asked, carelessly, not trusting herself to say more.

"You have—it's not my business, I know," urged the sailor, "but I don't mind, if I can spare you any worry in the future—you have a lot of stock in the Belinda and Lone Star, haven't you?"

"Yes," she replied.

"It does not pay at all, does it?" he asked.

She looked at him coldly as she responded, "I have not received any dividends this year."

"But you spoke to me once as if you counted on this stock," he returned—"as if you thought that the dividends were only deferred."

"Did I?" she said, distantly, as though the matter interested her very little.

"That was why I took the liberty of getting the facts out of Tom Pixley," Stone continued. "It wasn't my business, I know, but, loving you as I did, I was afraid you might be bitterly disappointed."

"No," she interrupted, "I am not likely to be bitterly disappointed."

"Then you were aware already that the Belinda and Lone Star is a failure?" he asked. "I am very glad you were, for I was afraid I might be the bearer of bad news."

She gazed at him in intense astonishment. "Do you mean to say that my stock is worthless?" she inquired.

"I fear it is worth very little," he answered. "Tom Pixley told me he believed that they were going to abandon the workings, and that the interest on the mortgage had not been paid for two years."

"So you knew all along that I was poor?" she asked. "Then why did you ask me to marry you?"

John Stone looked at her for a moment in amazement, while his cheeks flamed. Then he rose to his feet and stood before her.

"Did you suppose that I wanted to marry you for your money?" he said, making an obvious effort for self-control.

"Yes," she answered, lowering her eyes. "And that is why I was going to accept you."

She felt that the man was still staring at her, wholly unable to understand.

"I am poor, very poor," she went on, hurriedly. "I don't know how I am going to live next month. I believed that you thought I was wealthy. It seemed

to me a mean thing for a man to do, to marry a woman for her money, so I didn't mind deceiving you."

He stood silently gazing at her for a minute, and she could not but think that a man was very slow to understand.

Then he sat down again, and took her hand once more, and petted it.

"You must have been sadly tried if you were willing to do a thing like that," he said, with infinite pity in his voice. "You poor child!"

It was her turn then to be astonished, but she was swifter of comprehension.

"Do you mean to say that you still want to marry me," she asked, looking him full in the face, "even after I have insulted you?"

"Yes," he answered. "I want to marry you—and more than ever now, so that you may never again be exposed to a temptation like this."

"But now I refuse to marry you," she returned, forcibly, as she withdrew her hand. "I say 'no' now —without hesitation this time."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because it isn't fair now," she responded.

"Fair?" he repeated, puzzled.

"I couldn't do it now; it would be too mean for anything," she explained. "As long as I supposed you thought I was rich and were going to marry me for my money, I didn't mind cheating you. I could let you marry me even if I didn't love you, and it

would only be serving you right. But now!—now I couldn't! It wouldn't be fair to you. I am pretty mean, I confess, but I'm not mean enough for that, I hope."

Again he took a moment to think before he spoke.

"I don't know what to make of you," he began. "Am I to understand that you were going to marry me, though you did not love me, so long as you thought I did not love you, but that now, when you know that I really do love you, for that very reason you refuse to marry me?"

"That's it," she cried. "You must see how I feel about it. It wouldn't be fair to marry you now I know you are in earnest, would it?"

"But if I am willing," he urged; "if I want you as much as ever; if I feel confident that I can get you to love me a little in time; if you will only let me hope—"

"Oh, I couldn't," she answered. "I couldn't cheat you now I really know you—now that I like you a great deal better than I did."

He was about to protest again, when she interrupted him.

"Don't let's talk about it any more," she said, impetuously; "it has given me a headache already."

Forbidden to speak upon the one subject about which he had something to say, the man said nothing, and for a minute or more there was silence.

They could hear the patter of the rain as it pelted against the window near which they were sitting. Then there was a slight flash of lightning, followed by a distant growl of thunder.

A shiver ran through Mrs. Randolph, and she gave a little nervous laugh.

"I hate lightning," she explained, "and I detest a storm—don't you? I don't see how any one can ever choose to be a sailor."

He smiled grimly. "I am a sailor," he said.

"And are you going to sea again soon?" she returned. "I shall miss you dreadfully. I'm glad I sha'n't be here in New York when you are gone. Perhaps I shall leave first."

"Where are you going?" he asked, eagerly.

"I've got to go somewhere," she answered, "now that I've had to change all my plans. I'm going to Milwaukee."

"To Milwaukee?" he repeated. "I did not know you had any friends there."

"I haven't," she answered, with a repetition of the hard little laugh. "Not a friend in Milwaukee, and not a friend in New York."

"Then why are you going?"

"I must earn my living, somehow," she responded, "and I can't paint, and I can't embroider, and I can't teach whist, and I'm not young enough to go on the stage—so I'm to settle down as the matron of a girl's

school in Milwaukee. The place has been offered to me, and I intend to accept it."

"When must you be there?" he inquired.

"Oh, I don't know," she answered. "Next week some time, or perhaps not till next month. I'm not sure when."

John Stone rose to go. "Then I may come to see you again—Evelyn?" he asked.

Her heart throbbed a little as she heard her name from his lips.

"Oh yes," she replied, cordially. "Come and see me as often as you can. I hate to be as lonely as I was this afternoon."

And she held out her hand.

"Good-by, then," he responded, and he raised her hand again and kissed it.

When he had gone she walked restlessly to and fro for several minutes. At last she opened her desk and took out the unfinished letter and tore it up impatiently. Then she went to the window and peered out.

Twilight was settling down over the city, but the sky was leaden, with not a gleam of sunset along the horizon. Lights were already twinkling here and there over the vast expanse of irregular roofs across which she was looking. The rain was heavier than ever, and it fell in sheets, now, as though it would never cease.

Yet the solitary woman looking out at the dreary

prospect did not feel so lonely as she had felt two hours earlier. She had meant to accept John Stone, and she had rejected him. But it was a comfort to her to know that somewhere in the immense city that spread out before her there was a man who really loved her.

(1898)

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IT was nearly five o'clock on an afternoon early in May when Dr. Richard Demarest bicycled up Fifth Avenue and into Central Park. He looked at his watch to make sure of the hour, and then he dismounted on the western side of the broad drive, whence he could see everybody who might seek to enter the Park long before they were likely to discover him. He had reason to believe that Miss Minnie Contoit, who had refused to marry him only a fortnight before, and whom he had not seen since, was going to take a little turn on her wheel in the Park that afternoon.

As it had happened, he had gone into the club to lunch that morning, and he had met her only brother, with whom he had always carefully maintained the most pleasant relations. By ingeniously pumping Ralph Contoit he had ascertained that the girl he loved was going out at five with her father and her grandfather. The brother had been even franker than brothers usually are.

"I say," he had declared, "I don't know what has come over Minnie this last ten days; she's been as cross as two sticks, and generally she's pretty even-

tempered for a girl, you know. But she's been so touchy lately; she nearly took my head off this morning! I guess you had better have Dr. Cheever come around and prescribe for her. Cocaine for a bad temper is what she needs now, I can tell you!"

Although he was a rejected lover, he was not melancholy. In the springtime youth feels the joy of living, and Richard Demarest took delight in the beauty of the day. The foliage was everywhere fresh and vigorous after the persistent rains of April, and a scent of young blossoms came to him from a clump of bushes behind the path. A group of half a dozen girls flashed past him on their wheels, laughing lightly as they sped along home, each of them with a bunch of fragrant lilacs lashed to her handlebar.

He followed them with his eye till they turned out of the Park; and then at the entrance he saw the girl he was waiting for riding her bicycle carefully across the car-tracks in Fifty-ninth Street. Her father and grandfather were with her, one on each side.

Dr. Demarest sprang on his wheel and sped on ahead. When he came to the foot of the Mall he swerved to the westward. Then he turned and retraced his path, reaching the branching of the ways just as General Contoit with his son and granddaughter arrived there.

The General was nearly seventy, but he sat his

wheel with a military stiffness, holding himself far more carefully than his son, the Professor. Between them came Miss Minnie Contoit, a slim slip of a girl, in a light-brown cloth suit, with her pale, blond hair coiled tightly under a brown alpine hat. They had just come up a hill, and the General's face was ruddy, but the girl's was as colorless as ever. Demarest had often wondered why it was that no exercise ever brought a flush to her ivory cheeks.

He watched her now as her grandfather caught sight of him, and cried out: "Hello, Doctor! Out for a spin?"

He saw her look up, and then she glanced away swiftly, as though to choose her course of conduct before she acknowledged his greeting.

"Good afternoon, General; how well you are looking this spring!" said Demarest. "Good afternoon, Professor. And you, too, Miss Contoit. Going round the Park, are you? May I join you?" He looked at her as he asked the question.

It was her grandfather who answered: "Come along, come along! We shall be delighted to have you!"

She said nothing. They were all four going up on the east side of the Mall, and they had already left behind them the bronze mass-meeting of misshapen celebrities which disfigures that broad plateau. A Park omnibus was loitering in front of them, and they could not pass it four abreast.

"Come on, papa," cried the girl; "let's leave grandpa and Dr. Demarest to take care of each other! We had better go ahead and show them the way!"

It struck Dr. Demarest that she was glad to get away from him, as though her sudden flight was an instinctive shrinking from his wooing. He smiled and held this for a good sign. He was in no hurry to have his talk out with her, and he did not mean to begin it until a proper opportunity presented itself. He was glad to have her in front of him, where he could follow her movements and get delight out of the play of the sunshine through the branches as it fell molten on her fine, light hair. It pleased him to watch her firm strokes as they came to a hill and to see that she rode with no waste of energy.

The General had done his duty in the long years of the war, and he liked to talk about what he had seen. Dr. Demarest was a good listener, and perhaps this was one reason why the old soldier was always glad of his company. The young doctor was considerate, also, and he never increased his pace beyond the gait most comfortable for his elder companion; and as they drew near to the Metropolitan Museum he guided the General away to the Fifth Avenue entrance and thence back to the main road, by which excursion they avoided the long and steep hill at the top of which stands Cleopatra's Needle. And as they had ridden on the level rather rapidly

SURE HE'D RATHER TALK TO YOU, MY DEAR, SO YOU CAN RUN ALONG TOGETHER"

they almost caught up with the General's son and granddaughter.

The two couples were close to each other as they went around the reservoir, along the shaded road on the edge of the Park, with the sidewalk of Fifth Avenue down below. Everywhere the grass was fresh and fragrant; and everywhere the squirrels were frequent and impertinent, cutting across the road almost under the wheels, or sitting up on the narrow sward in impudent expectation of the nuts gently thrown to them from the carriages.

When they came to McGowan's Pass he saw the Professor suddenly dismount, and he thought that Minnie was going on alone and that her father had to call her back.

"Shall we rest here for a while, father?" asked the Professor, as the General and the Doctor dismounted.

"Just as you say," the old soldier answered; "just as you say. I'm not at all fatigued, not at all. But don't let us old fogies keep you young folks from your exercise. Minnie, you and the Doctor can ride on—"

"But, grandpa—" she began, in protest.

"I'll stay here a minute or two with your father," the General continued. "The Doctor is very kind to let me talk to him, but I'm sure he'd rather talk to you, my dear; so you two can run along together."

"I shall be delighted to accompany Miss Contoit if she cares to have a little spin," said Dr. Demarest, turning to her.

"Oh, well," she answered, a little ungraciously; then she smiled swiftly, and added: "I always do what grandpa wants. Don't you think I'm a very good little girl?" And with that she started forward, springing lightly to her seat after her bicycle was in motion.

Demarest was jumping on his wheel to follow, when her father called out, "Don't let her ride uphill too fast, Doctor!"

"Isn't papa absurd?" she asked, laughing; "and grandpa, too? They are always wanting me to take care of myself, just as if I didn't!"

They overtook and passed a woman weighing two hundred pounds and full forty years of age, who was toiling along on a bicycle, dressed in a white skirt, a pink shirt-waist, and a straw sailor-hat. The Doctor turned and bowed to this strange apparition, but the plump lady was too fully occupied in her arduous task to be able to do more than gasp out: "Good—after—noon—Doctor."

When they had gone one hundred yards ahead the Doctor's companion expressed her surprise. "You do know the funniest people!" she cried. "Who on earth was that?"

"That?" he echoed. "Oh, that's a patient of Dr. Cheever's. He advised her to get a bicycle if she wanted to be thinner—"

"And he told me to get one if I wanted to be a little fatter!" the girl interrupted. "Isn't that inconsistent?"

"I don't think so," the young man answered, glad that the conversation had taken this impersonal turn, and yet wondering how he could twist it to the point where he wanted it. "Outdoor exercise helps people to health, you see, and if they are unhealthily fat it tends to thin them down, and if they are very thin it helps them to put on flesh."

"I'd bike fourteen hours a day if I was a porpoise like that," said the girl, glancing back at the plump struggler behind them.

Just then a horn tooted and a coach came around the next turn. There were on it three or four girls in gay spring costumes, and two of them bowed to Dr. Demarest.

Behind the four-in-hand followed a stylish victoria, in which sat a handsome young woman alone. She was in black. Her somber face lighted with a smile as she acknowledged the young doctor's bow.

"I've seen her somewhere," said the girl by his side. "Who is she?"

"That's Mrs. Cyrus Poole," he answered; "the widow of the Wall Street operator who died two years ago."

"What lots of people you know," she commented.

"How is a young doctor to get on unless he knows lots of people?" was his answer.

She said nothing for a minute or two, as they threaded their way through a tangle of vehicles stretching along the northernmost drive of the Park.

Then she asked: "Why is it that most of the women we have passed this afternoon sitting back in their carriages look bored to death?"

"I suppose it's because they've got all they want," the Doctor responded. "They have nothing left to live for; they have had everything. That's what makes them so useful to our profession. They send for us because they are bored, and they want sympathy. I suppose everybody likes to talk about himself, especially when he's out of sorts; now, you see, the family doctor can always be sent for, and it's his business to listen to your account of your symptoms. That's what he's paid for."

"I don't think that's a nice way of earning a living, do you?" returned the girl.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered. "Why not? It's our duty to relieve suffering, and these women are just suffering for a chance to describe all their imaginary ailments."

"Women?" she cried, indignantly. "Are all these old fools women?"

"There must be men sometimes, I suppose," he replied; "but most of a family physician's work is with the women, of course."

Then it seemed to him that he saw before him the opportunity he had been awaiting. They were now climbing the hill at the northwestern corner of the Park. He slowed up so that she should not be tempted to overexert herself. He even went so far

as to lag a little behind. When they began to go down again gently, he came alongside.

"By the way," he began, "speaking of what a family physician has to do reminds me that I want to ask your advice."

"My advice?" she echoed, with the light little laugh that thrilled through him always. "Why, I don't know anything about medicine."

"It isn't a professional consultation I want," he answered, laughing himself, "it's friendly counsel. Don't you remember that when you told me you couldn't love me you went on to say you hoped we should always be good friends?"

"Yes," she responded, calmly, "I remember that. And I hope that if I can really show any friendliness in any way, you will let me."

"That's what I am coming to," he returned. "You know, I've been helping Dr. Cheever as a sort of third man while Dr. Aspinwall has been ill? Well, Dr. Aspinwall isn't getting any better, and he's got to quit for a year, anyhow. So Dr. Cheever is going to take me with him—"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she broke in, heartily. "That's splendid for you, isn't it?"

"It will be splendid for me if I can keep the place and do the work to his satisfaction," he answered.

"Oh, I guess Dr. Cheever knows what he is about," retorted the girl, gaily. "He knows how clever you are."

"Thank you," the young man returned. "I felt sure you would be pleased, because you have always been so kind to me."

He hesitated for a moment, and then continued: "I feel as if I owe you an apology—"

"What for?" she asked, in surprise.

"For the way I behaved last time we—we had a talk," he answered.

"Oh, *then*," she commented; and it seemed to him that she had almost made an effort to retain the non-committal expression she was affecting.

"You may remember," he went on, "that I asked you to marry me, and that you refused, and that you told me you didn't love me at all, but you did like me—"

"What's the use of going over all that again?" she asked.

"I must make myself right with you, Miss Minnie," he urged. "You said we could be friends, and I was all broke up then, and I didn't know just what I was saying, and I told you friendship wasn't any good to me, and if I couldn't have you there wasn't anything else I wanted. I must have been rude, indeed, and it has worried me ever since."

"I'll forgive you, if that's what you mean," she responded. "I hadn't really thought about it twice. It isn't of any consequence."

"It is to me," he returned. "Now I've changed

my mind, and if you will offer the friendship again I'll accept it gladly."

"Why, Dr. Demarest!" she said, smiling, but with a flash in her gray eyes, "of course we can be good friends, just as we have always been. And now you needn't talk any more about this foolish misunderstanding."

So saying she started ahead. They had been climbing a hill, and now they had on their left a broad meadow, gay with groups of tennis-players. At an opening on the right a mounted policeman sat his horse as immovable as an equestrian statue. Just before them were two gentlemen with impatient trotters trying to get a clear space; and there was also a double file of young men and girls from some riding-school, under the charge of a robust German riding-master.

It was not for two or three minutes that Dr. Demarest was able to resume his position by the side of Miss Contoit.

"I had to set myself right," he began, abruptly, "because if we really are friends I want you to help me."

"I shall be very glad, I'm sure," she replied. "I've told you so already."

"But what I want is something very serious," he continued.

"What is it?" she asked, drawing away from him a little.

"It's advice," he explained.

She gave a light laugh of relief. "Oh, *advice*," she repeated; "anybody can give advice."

"Not the advice I want," he responded, gravely. "It's a very solemn thing for me, I can assure you."

"And what is this very solemn thing?" she inquired, airily.

"It's marriage," he answered. "I've got to get married, and—and—"

"Don't let's go back to that again," she said, with frank impatience. "I thought we had settled that once for all."

"Oh, I didn't mean you," he returned, apologetically.

"You didn't mean me?" she repeated, in amazement. "Why, I thought—well, it's no matter what I thought, of course."

"I'm afraid I'm getting things all mixed up," he said, calmly. "Of course, you are the only woman I love, and the only woman I ever shall love. I told you that the last time we met, and you told me that you didn't love me—so that settled it."

"Well?" she interrogated.

"Well, if I can't have what I want," he explained, "I'd better get what I need."

"I confess I do not know what you are talking about," she declared.

"It's simple enough," he returned. "I'm a doctor, and I'm young—I'm only thirty—and I haven't a

bald spot yet, so people think I'm even younger than I am, and they haven't confidence in it. So I've got to get married."

The girl laughed out merrily. "Can't you get a bald spot any other way?" she asked.

"If I have a wife I don't need a bald spot," he responded. "A wife is a warrant of respectability. Every doctor will tell you that's the way patients feel. I'm tired of going to see some old woman for Dr. Cheever, and sending up my card and overhearing her say: 'I won't see him! I don't want Dr. Demarest! I sent for Dr. Cheever, and it's Dr. Cheever I want to see!' That has happened to me, and not only once or twice, either."

"How could any woman be so unlady-like?" the girl asked, indignantly. "She must have been a vulgar old thing!"

"There's more than one of her in New York," the young doctor asserted, "and that's one reason why I've got to get married. And between you and me, I think my chance of staying with Dr. Cheever would be better if I had a wife. Of course, he doesn't say so, but I can't help knowing what he thinks."

The girl made no comment on this, and they rode along side by side. They were now on the crest of a hill, and they overlooked the broad expanse of the reservoir. The almost level rays of the sinking sun thrust themselves through the leafy branches and made a rosy halo about her fair head.

"So that's why I've come to you for advice," he began again.

"But I don't see what good my advice will be to you," she returned. "You don't expect me to pick out a wife for you, do you?"

"Well, that's about it!" he admitted.

"The idea!" she retorted. "Why, it's perfectly absurd!"

"So long as I cannot get the girl I love, marriage ceases to be a matter of sentiment with me," he went on, stolidly. "I come to you as a friend who knows girls—knows them in a way no man can ever know them. I want your help in selecting a woman who will make a good wife for a doctor."

"How do you know she will have you?" she thrust at him.

"Of course, I don't know," he admitted. "I can't know till I try, can I? And if at first I don't succeed I must try, try again. If the one you pick out refuses me I'll have to get you to pick out another."

"So it's a mere marriage of convenience you are after?" the girl asked. "That's all very well for you, no doubt; but how about the woman who marries you? I don't think it's a very nice lookout for her, do you? That's just the way with you men always! You never think about the woman's feelings!"

"I'll do my duty to her," he answered.

"Your *duty!*" sniffed the girl, indignantly.

"I'll be so attentive to her that she will never guess my heart is given to another," he went on.

"Don't be too sure of that," she returned. "Women have very sharp eyes—sharper than you men think—especially about a thing like that!"

"I am not going to borrow trouble," the Doctor declared, suavely. "I shall always be as nice to her as I can, and if it is in my power to make her happy, then she will be happy. But we needn't anticipate. What I want you to do now is to help me to find the right woman. It will be my business to take care of her afterward."

"Oh, very well," said the girl, rather sharply. "Have you anybody in particular in view?"

"I haven't really fixed on anybody yet," he explained. "I wanted your advice first, for I'm going to rely on that. I feel sure you won't let me make a mistake about a matter so important to me."

"Then don't let's waste any time!" she cried, peremptorily.

"Really," he declared, "it's astonishing how a little bit of a thing like you can be so bossy." She looked at him fiercely, so he made haste to add, "But I like it—I like it!"

The girl laughed, but with a certain constraint, so it seemed to him.

"Come, now," she said, "if I must help you, let me see your list of proposed victims!"

"Do you know Dr. Pennington, the rector of St.

Boniface's, in Philadelphia?" he began. "Well, he has two daughters—nice girls, both of them—"

"Which one do you want?" asked the girl. "The tall one who squints, or the fat one with red hair?"

"Come, now," he returned, "she doesn't really squint, you know."

"Call it a cast in her eye if you like; I don't mind. It isn't anything to me," she asserted. "Is it the tall one you want?"

"I don't care," he answered.

"You don't care?" she repeated.

"No," he returned; "that's why I've come to you. I don't care. Which one do you recommend?"

"I don't recommend either of them!" she responded, promptly. "I shouldn't be a true friend if I let you throw yourself away on one of those frights!"

"I'll give them up, if you say so," said he; "but I've always heard that they are good, quiet girls—domesticated, you know—and—"

"Who is next?" she pursued, with a return of her arbitrary manner.

"Well," he suggested, bashfully, "I haven't any reason to suppose she would look at me, and it sounds so conceited in me to suggest that such a handsome woman—and so rich, too—would listen to me, but—"

"Who is this paragon?" his companion demanded.

"Didn't I mention her name?" he responded. "I thought I had. We passed her only a little while ago—Mrs. Poole."

"Mrs. Poole?" the girl replied. "That was the sick-looking creature in black lolling back in a victoria, wasn't it?"

"She isn't sick, really," he retorted; "but I don't think mourning is becoming to her. Of course, if we are married she will wear colors and—"

"I didn't know you were willing to take up with a widow!" she interrupted, with a slight touch of acerbity. "I thought it was a girl you were looking for!"

"It was a wife of some sort," he replied. "I don't know myself what would suit me best. That's why I am consulting you. I'm going to rely on your judgment—"

"But you mustn't do that!" she cried.

"It is just what I've got to do!" he insisted. "And if you think it would be a mistake for me to marry a widow, why—it's for you to say."

"I must say that I think it would be a great mistake for a doctor to marry a woman who looks as if she couldn't live through the week," she responded. "I should suppose it would ruin any physician's practice to have a wife as woebegone as that Mrs. Poole! Of course, I don't know her, and I've nothing to say against her, and she may be as beautiful and as charming as you say she is."

"I give her up at once," he declared, laughing. "She shall never even know how near she came to having a chance to reject me."

"Is that all?" the girl asked, a little spitefully. "Have you anybody else on your list?"

"I have only just one more," he replied.

"Who is she?" was the girl's quick question.

"I'm not sure that you have met her," he returned. "She's from the South somewhere, or the Southwest, I don't know—"

"What's her name?" was the impatient query.

"Chubb," he answered. "It's not a pretty name, is it? But that doesn't matter if I'm to persuade her to change it."

"Chubb?" the girl repeated, as though trying to recall the name. "Chubb? Not Virgie Chubb?"

"Her name is Virginia," he admitted.

The girl by his side laughed a little shrilly. "Virgie Chubb?" she cried. "That scrawny thing?"

The Doctor confessed that Miss Chubb was not exactly plump.

"Not plump? I should think not, indeed," the girl declared. "Do you know what Miss Marlenspuyk said about her? She said that Virgie Chubb looked like a death's-head on a toothpick! That's what she said!"

They were approaching the Mall, and the Doctor knew that his time was now very brief. They had to slow up just then, as a policeman was conveying across the broad road three or four nurses with a baby-carriage or two, and then they had to steer clear of half a dozen working-men going home across

the Park, with pipes in their mouths and dinner-pails swinging in their hands.

"So you don't think Miss Chubb would be a good wife for me?" he inquired.

"I have nothing to say at all! It isn't really any of my business!" she replied. "It is simply absurd of you to ask me!"

"But you must help me out," he urged. "So far you have only told me that I mustn't marry any of the girls I had on my list."

"I don't want to see you throw yourself away," she returned. "A pretty kind of a friend I should be if I encouraged you to marry your Virgie Chubb and your Widow Poole!"

"That's it, precisely," he asserted; "that's why I've come to you. Of course, I don't want to throw myself away. Your advice has been invaluable to me—simply invaluable. But so far you have only shown me how it is that none of these girls will suit. That brings me no nearer my object. I've simply got to have a wife."

"I don't see why you need be in such a hurry," she replied.

"I must, I must!" he retorted. "And there's one more girl I haven't mentioned so far—"

"You've kept her to the last!" she snapped.

"Yes, I've kept her to the last, because I haven't any right even to hope that she would have me. She is not a widow, and she hasn't a cast in her eye,

and she is neither fat nor scrawny; she is just a lovely young girl—"

"You speak of her with more enthusiasm than you did of any of the others," she broke in. "Do I know her?"

"You ought to know her," he answered; "but I doubt if you think as well of her as I do."

"Who is she?" was her swift question.

"You won't be offended?" he asked.

"Of course not! How absurd! Why should I be offended?" she responded. "Who is she? Who is she?"

The Doctor answered seriously, and with a quaver of emotion in his voice, "She is the girl I have loved for a long time, and her name is Minnie Contoit!"

The girl did not say anything. Her face was as pale as ever, but there was a light in the depths of her cool gray eyes.

"Listen to me once more, Minnie!" implored the young fellow by her side. "You say that none of these other girls will suit me, and I knew that before you said it. I knew that you are the only girl I ever wanted. You promised me your friendship the last time we talked this over, and now I've had a chance to tell you how much I need a wife I have hoped you would look at the matter in a clearer light."

She said nothing. He gave a hasty glance backward and he saw that her father and her grandfather

were only a hundred yards or so behind them. The reddening sunset on their right cast lengthening shadows across the road. The spring day was drawing to an end, and the hour had come when he was to learn his fate forever.

"Minnie," he urged once more, "don't you think it is your duty—as a friend, you know— to give me the wife I ought to have?"

She looked at him, and laughed nervously, and then dropped her eyes.

"Oh, *well*," she said at last, "if I must!"

(1900)

In a Hansom

THERE were two men in the cab as it turned into Fifth Avenue and began to skirt the Park on its way down-town. One of them was perhaps fifty; he had grizzled hair, cold, gray eyes, and a square jaw. The other appeared to be scant thirty; he had soft brown eyes, and a soft brown mustache drooped over his rather irresolute mouth. The younger man was the better-looking of the two, and the better dressed; and he seemed also to be more at home in New York, while the elder was probably a stranger in the city—very likely a Westerner, if the black slouch hat was a true witness.

They sat side by side in silence, having nothing to say, the one to the other. The shadows that were slowly stretching themselves across the broad walk on the Park side of the Avenue shivered as the spring breeze played with the tender foliage of the trees that spread their ample branches almost over the wall. The languid scent of blossoming bushes was borne fitfully beyond the border of the Park. To the eyes of the younger of the two men in the hansom the quivering play of light and shade brought no pleasure; and he had no delight in the fragrance of the spring-

time—although in former years he had been wont to thrill with unspoken joy at the promise of summer.

The elder of the two took no thought of such things; it was as though he had no time to waste. Of course, he was aware that winter followed the fall, and that summer had come in its turn; but this was all in the day's work. He had the reputation of being a good man in his business; and although the spring had brought no smile to his firm lips, he was satisfied with his success in the latest task intrusted to him. He had in his pocket a folded paper, signed by the Governor of a State in the Mississippi Valley, and sealed with the seal of that commonwealth; and in the little bag on his knees he carried a pair of handcuffs.

As the hansom approached the Plaza at the entrance to the Park, the gray-eyed Westerner caught sight of the thickening crowd, and of the apparent confusion in which men and women and children were mixed, bicycles and electric cabs, carriages and cross-town cars, all weltering together; and he wondered for a moment whether he had done wisely in allowing so much apparent freedom to his prisoner. He looked right and left swiftly, as though sizing up the chances of escape, and then he glanced down at the bag on his knees.

"You needn't be afraid of my trying to run," said the younger man. "What good would it do me? You've caught me once, and I don't doubt you could do it again."

"That's so," returned the other, with just a tinge of self-satisfaction in his chilly smile. "I shouldn't wonder if I could."

"Besides, I don't want to get away now," insisted the first speaker. "I've got to face the music sooner or later, and I don't care how quick the brass band strikes up. I want to take my punishment and have it over. That's what I want. I'm going to plead guilty and save the State the trouble of trying me, and the expense, too. That ought to count in cutting down the sentence, oughtn't it? And then I shall study the rules of—of that place, and I mean to learn them by heart. There won't be anybody there in a greater hurry to get out than I, and so I'm going to be a model of good conduct."

"It ain't every fellow that talks like that who's able to keep it up," commented the officer of the law.

"I guess I can, anyhow," replied his prisoner. "I've made up my mind to get this thing over as soon as possible, and to have a little life left for me when I'm let out."

The elder man made no answer. He thought that his companion was sincere and that there would be no attempt to escape, whatever the opportunity. But his experience trained him to take no chances, and he did not relax his vigilance.

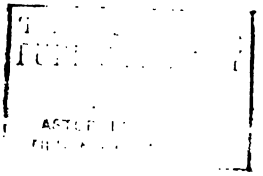
A horn sounded behind him; and a minute later a four-in-hand passed with tinkling chains and rumbling wheels. The top of the coach was filled with elab-

orately attired men and with girls in all the gayety of their spring gowns; and they seemed to be having a good time. They did not mean to hurt the younger of the two men in the hansom; they did not know, of course; but just then their mirth smote him to the heart.

Fifth Avenue is an alluring spectacle late in the afternoon of the first Saturday in June; and when the hansom-cab topped the crest of a hill, the two men could see far down the vista of the broad street. The roadway was a solid mass of vehicles in ceaseless motion; and the sidewalks were filled with humanity. To the man who was being taken to his trial the bright color and the brisk joyousness of the scene were actually painful. Of the countless men and women scattered up and down the Avenue in the glaring sunshine, how many knew him to call him by name and to take him by the hand? More than a hundred, no doubt, for he had been popular. And how many of them would give him a second thought after they had read of his arrest and of his trial and his sentence?

How many of them would miss him?—would be conscious even of his absence? And he recalled the disgust of a friend who had gone around the world and had come back after a year or more with picturesque stories of his wanderings in far countries, only to have the first man he met in his club ask him casually where he'd been "for the last week or so."

THIS YEAR THE GIRLS WERE PRETTIER THAN USUAL.



And now he, too, was going to a strange land; and he foresaw that when he returned—if he ever got back alive!—he would not know what to answer if any one should inquire where he had been for the last week or so. The world was a bitterly selfish place where men had no time to think except of themselves. If a fellow could not keep up with the procession, he had to drop out of the ranks and be glad if the rest of them did not tramp over him. He knew how hard he had tried not to be left behind, and how little the effort had profited him.

With an aggressive movement that made his companion even more alert than usual, the brown-eyed young man shook himself erect, as though to cast behind him these evil thoughts. It was a beautiful day, and flowers blazed in the broad windows of the florists—roses and carnations and lilacs. There were lilacs also in the arbitrary hats the women were wearing, and the same tint was often echoed in their costumes. He had always been attentive to the changes of fashion—always subject to the charm of woman. As he was borne down the Avenue by the side of the man in whose custody he was, it struck him that this year the girls were prettier than usual—younger, more graceful, more fascinating, more desirable. He followed with his eyes first one and then another, noting the sweep of the skirt, the curve of the bodice, the grace of gesture, the straggling tendril of hair that had escaped upon the neck. For a

brief moment the pleasure of his eye took his thoughts away from his future; and then swiftly his mind leaped forward to the next spring, when no woman's face would chance within the range of his vision, and when the unseen blossoming of nature would bring only impotent desire. What zest could there be in life when life was bounded in a whitewashed cell?

At Thirty-fourth Street the hansom was halted to let a funeral cross the current of the Avenue. An open carriage came first, its seats covered with flowers, tortured into stiff set pieces; the white hearse followed, with a satin-covered coffin visible through its plate-glass sides; and then half a dozen carriages trailed after. The prisoner in the hansom noticed that the shades were drawn in the one that followed the hearse; it bore a grief too sacred for observation—a mother's, no doubt. He was suddenly glad that his parents had both died when he was yet a boy. To be alone in the world, with no family to keep him warm with tolerant affection—this had often saddened him; now at last he rejoiced at it. When a man is on his way to prison to serve a term of years, the fewer those who cherish him, the luckier for them. That he loved a woman—that, indeed, he was going to jail because of his love for her—this might add poignancy to his pain; but he felt himself manly for once in trying to believe it was better now that she did not love him, that she did not even know of his love for her.

In time the hansom turned from Fifth Avenue into Broadway; it went on down-town past Union Square, with its broad trees, and past Grace Church, with its grateful greenery; but the younger of the two men was no longer taking note of what sped before his gaze. He was wondering what the woman he loved would think when she would hear of his going to prison—whether she would care very much—whether she would suspect that his crime was due to his passion for her. That, of course, she could not guess—that he had yielded to the temptation to lay hands on what was not his, solely because he wanted more money to place at her feet. For himself, he had been making enough; but for her he must have more. He could not have ventured to invite her to give up anything for his sake. He wanted to be able to offer her all she had been accustomed to have—and more too, were that possible. He was conceited enough ordinarily, he feared; and yet when he thought of her he felt so humble that he had never dared to dream of going to her empty-handed—of asking her to make any sacrifice in loving him. He had never told her of his love, and perhaps she did not even guess it; and yet women are swift to discover a thing like that. It might be that she had seen it; and that when others should speak of him as he knew he deserved to be spoken of, she might come to his defence and find some word of extenuation for his misdeed. This possibility, remote as it was, gave him pleasure;

and he smiled at the suggestion as it came to him.

From this day-dream he was aroused as the driver of the hansom jerked the horse back on his haunches to avoid running down a little old woman who was trying to cross Broadway with a bundle of sticks balanced on her head. As the animal almost touched her she looked up, and her glance crossed that of the prisoner. He perceived instantly that she was an Italian, that she was not so old as she looked, and that she had been beautiful not so long ago. Then he wondered whether any man had done wrong for her sake—whether or not two of her lovers had fought in the soft Sicilian moonlight and one had done the other to death. Well, why not? There were worse things than death, after all.

As they went on farther and farther down-town, Broadway began to seem emptier. It was the first Saturday in June, and most of the stores were closed. When they drew near to the City Hall, the great street, although not so desolate as it is on a Sunday, lacked not a little of its week-day activity. It was as though a truce had been proclaimed in the battle of business; but the forts were guarded, and the fight would begin again on the Monday morning.

After the hansom passed the Post Office the buildings on the right and the left raised themselves higher and higher, until the cab was at last rolling along what might be the bottom of a cañyon. And it

seemed to him that the cliff-dwellers who inhabited the terraces of this man-made gorge, and who spent the best part of their lives a hundred feet above the level of the sidewalk, were no peaceable folk withdrawn from the strife of the plains; they were relentless savages ever on the war-path, and always eager to torture every chance captive. Wars may be less frequent than they were and less cruel, but the struggle for existence is bitterer than ever, and as meanly waged as any Apache raid.

The young man in the hansom felt his hatred hot within him for those with whom he had meant to match himself. He had been beaten in the first skirmish, and yet—but for the one thing—he could hold himself as good as the best of them. How many of the men under the shadow of Trinity were more honest than he? Some of them, no doubt—but how many? How many names now honorable would be disgraced if the truth were suddenly made known? How many of those who thought themselves honest, and who were honest now, had in the past yielded to a temptation once, as he had done, and having been luckier than he in escaping detection then, had never again risked it? That was what he had intended to do; he knew himself not to be dishonest, although the alluring opportunity had been too much for him. If only he could have held on for another day, all would have been well—no one would have had cause ever to suspect him; and never

again would he have stepped aside from the narrow path of rectitude.

There was no use in repining. Luck had been against him, that was all. Some men had been guilty of what he had done, and they had been able to bluff it out. His bluff had been called, and he was now going to jail to pay his debt of honor. Perhaps the copy-book was right when it declared honesty to be the best policy. And yet he could not help feeling that fate had played him a mean trick. To put in his possession at the same moment a large sum of money and the information that the most powerful group of capitalists in America had determined to take hold of a certain railroad and re-establish it, and to have thus the possibility put before him at the very hour when he had discovered that perhaps he had a chance to win the woman he loved, if only he could approach her on an equality of fortune—this temptation just then was too great to withstand. He had yielded, and for a little while it had seemed as though he was about to succeed. Twenty-four hours more and he could have put back the money he had borrowed—for so he liked to look on his act. That money once restored, he would have waited patiently for the rest of his profit. Thereafter he could have afforded to be honest; he was resolved never to overstep the law again; he would have kept the letter of it vigorously—if only he had escaped detection that once.

But blind chance smote him down from behind. Suddenly, without an hour's warning, the leader of the group of sustaining capitalists dropped dead; his heart had failed, worn out by the friction and the strain. The market broke; and all who had bought stocks on a margin were sold out instantly and inexorably. Then the supporting orders came in and prices were pushed up again; but it was too late. Two days before, or a day after, that capitalist might have died without having by his death unwittingly caused an arrest. And as the hansom rolled on toward the Battery the prisoner had again a resentment against the capitalist for choosing so unfortunate a day to die.

Now the end had come; of course, he had been unable to replace the money he had taken, and there was nothing for him to do but to fly. But instead of going to Canada, and hiding his trail, and then slipping across to Europe, he had been foolish enough to come here to New York to have another glimpse of the woman for the love of whom he had become a thief. Once more luck had been against him; as it happened, she had gone out of town for Decoration Day; and instead of taking ship to Europe, he had waited. Only that Saturday morning he had met her brother and had been told of her return to town. But when he was about to call on her that afternoon, the gray-eyed man had called on him; and here he was on his way to his trial, and he had not seen her, after all.

Then he went back to the last time he had had speech with her. It was during one of his frequent visits to New York, and he had dined at the club with her brother, who had told him that she was going to the play that night with her mother. So he had betaken himself to the theater also, and he had gazed at her across the house; and then he had put her and her mother into their carriage, and the old lady had asked him to dinner the next evening. He had supposed it was an eleventh-hour invitation and that he was to fill the seat of some man who had unexpectedly backed out; but none the less he had accepted with obvious pleasure. And it was from a few casual words of her father's, after dinner, that he got the first inkling of the railroad deal; and then, before the time came for him to go, he had been fortunate enough to have her to himself for a quarter of an hour. She had been graciousness itself, and for the first time he had begun to have hope. He could not recall what he had said, but his memory was clear as to how she had looked. He could not remember whether he had allowed her even a glimpse of his deep passion. It might be that she had guessed it, although she had made no sign; he knew that women were as keen as they were inscrutable.

The hansom was at last under the ugly framework of the Elevated almost at the South Ferry gate. The tide was coming in strongly, and there was a salt savor in the breeze that blew up from the lower bay.

The prisoner relished it as he filled his lungs with the fresh air; and then he asked himself how long it would be before that saline taste would touch his nostrils again.

As the cab drew up, the elder of the two men in it laid his hand on the arm of the younger.

"I can trust you without the wristlets, can't I?" he asked.

The other flushed. "Put them on if you want," he answered, "but you needn't. I'm not going to make a fool of myself again. I've told you I'm going to plead guilty and do everything else I can to get the thing over as soon as possible."

The gray-eyed man looked at him firmly.

"You're talking sense," he declared. "I'll trust you."

As they were about to step out, their horse was somewhat startled by an electric automobile that rolled past clumsily and drew up immediately in front of them.

The prisoner stood stock-still, with his foot vainly reaching out for the sidewalk, as he saw the brother of the woman he loved help her out of the vehicle. Then the brother asked a newsboy to point the way to the boat for Governors Island; and she went with him as the urchin eagerly guided them. She did not look around; she never saw the man who loved her; and in a minute she turned the corner and was out of sight.

The officer of the law tapped his prisoner on the arm again.

"Come on," he said. "What's the matter with you? Have you seen a ghost?"

(1899)

The Frog that
Played the Trombone

ON a corner of my desk there stands a china shell; its flat and oval basin is about as broad as the palm of my hand; it is a spotted brownish-yellow on the outside, and a purply-pinkish white on the inside; and on the crinkled edge of one end there sits a green frog with his china mouth wide open, thus revealing the ruddy hollow of his interior. At the opposite end of the shell there is a page of china music, purporting to be the first four bars of a song by Schubert. Time was when the frog held in his long greenish-yellow arms a still longer trombone made of bright brass wire, bent into shape, and tipped with a flaring disk of gilded porcelain. In the days when the china frog was young he pretended to be playing on the brass trombone. Despite its musical assertiveness, the function of the frog that played the trombone was humble enough: the shell was designed to serve as a receiver for the ashes of cigars and cigarettes. But it is a score of years at least since the china frog has held the brass trombone to its open lips. Only a few months after he gave his first mute concert on the corner of my table the carelessness of a chance visitor toppled him over on

the floor, and broke off both his arms and so bent the trombone that even the barren pretense of his solo became an impossibility. A week or two later the battered musical instrument disappeared; and ever since then the gaping mouth of the frog has seemed to suggest that he was trying to sing Schubert's song. His open countenance, I am sorry to say, has often tempted my friends to make sport of him. They have filled the red emptiness of his body with the gray ashes of their cigars; they have even gone so far as to put the stump of a half-smoked cigarette between his lips, as though he were solacing himself thus for the loss of his voice.

Although the frog is no longer playing an inaudible tune on an immovable instrument, I keep it on a corner of my desk, where it has been for nearly twenty years. Sometimes of a winter's night, when I take my seat at the desk before the crackling and cheerful hickory fire, the frog that played the trombone catches my eye, and I go back in memory to the evening when it performed its first solo in my presence, and I see again the beautiful liquid eyes of the friend who brought it to me. We were very young then, both of us, that night before Christmas, and our hearts kept time with the lilt of the tune that the frog played silently on his trombone. Now I am young no longer, I am even getting old, and my friend has been dead this many a year. Sometimes, as I look at the gaping frog, I know that if I could

hear the song he is trying to sing I should hate it for the memories it would recall.

He who gave it to me was not a school fellow, a companion of my boyhood, but he was the friend of my youth and a classmate in college. It was in our Junior year that he joined us, bringing a good report from the fresh-water college where he had been for two years. I can recall his shy attitude the first morning in chapel when we were wondering what sort of a fellow the tall, dark, handsome new-comer might be. The accidents of the alphabet put us side by side in certain class-rooms, and I soon learned to know him, and to like him more and more with increasing knowledge. He was courteous, gentle, kindly, ever ready to do a favor, ever grateful for help given him, and if he had a fault it was this, that he was jealous of his friends. Although his nature was healthy and manly, he had a feminine craving for affection, and an almost womanly unreason in the exactions he made on his friends. Yet he was ever ready to spend himself for others, and to do to all as he would be done by.

Although fond of out-door sports, his health was not robust. He lacked stamina. There was more than a hint of consumption in the brightness of his eye, in the spot of color on his cheek, in the hollowness of his chest, and in the cough which sometimes seized him in the middle of a recitation. Toward the end of our senior year he broke down once, and

was kept from college a week; but the spring came early, and with the returning warmth of the sunshine he made an effort and took his place with us again. He was a good scholar, but not one of the best in the class. He did his work faithfully in the main, having no relish for science, but enjoying the flavor of the classics. He studied German that year, and he used to come to me reciting Heine's poems with enthusiasm, carried away by their sentiment, but shocked by the witty cynicism which served as its corrective. He wrote a little verse now and then, as young men do, immature, of course, and individual only in so far as it was morbid. I think that he would have liked to devote himself to literature as a career, but it had been decided that he was to study law.

After Class Day and Commencement the class scattered forever. In September, when I returned to New York and settled down to my profession, I found my friend at the Columbia Law School. His father had died during the summer, leaving nothing but a life-insurance policy, on the income of which the mother and son could live modestly until he could get into a law office and begin to make his way in the world. They had taken a floor in a little boarding-house in a side street, and they were very comfortable; their money had been invested for them by one of his father's business associates, who had so arranged matters that their income was much larger than they had expected. In this modest home

he and his mother lived happily. I guessed that the father had been hard and unbending, and that my friend and his mother had been drawn closer together. Of a certainty I never saw a man more devoted than he was to her, or more tender, and she was worthy of the affection he lavished on her.

In those days the Law School course extended over two years only, and it did not call for very hard work on the part of the student, so he was free to pass frequent evenings in my library. I used to go and see him often, for I liked his mother, and I liked to see them sitting side by side, he holding her hand often as he debated vehemently with me the insoluble questions which interested us then. During the second winter I sometimes saw there a brown-eyed girl of perhaps twenty, pretty enough, but with a sharp, nervous manner I did not care for. This was the daughter of the lady who kept the boarding-house; and my friend was polite to her, as he was to all women; he was attentive even, as a young man is wont to be toward a quick-witted girl. But nothing in the manner led me to suppose that he was interested in her more than in any other woman. I did not like her myself, for she struck me as sharp-tongued.

It is true that I saw less of my friend that second winter, being hard at work myself. It was in the spring, two years after our graduation, that I received a letter from him announcing his engagement

to the young lady I had seen him with, his landlady's daughter. My first thought, I remember, was to wonder how his mother would feel at the prospect of another woman's coming between them. His letter was a long dithyramb, and it declared that never had there been a man so happy, and that great as was his present joy, it was as nothing compared with the delight in store for him. He wrote me that each had loved the other from the first, and each had thought the other did not care, until at last he could bear it no longer; so he had asked her, and got his answer. "You cannot know," he wrote, "what this is to me. It is my life—it is the making of my life; and if I should die to-night, I should not have lived in vain, for I have tasted joy, and death cannot rob me of that."

Of course the engagement must needs be long, because he was as yet in no position to support a wife; but he had been admitted to the bar, and he could soon make his way, with the stimulus he had now.

I was called out of town suddenly about that time, and I saw him for a few minutes only before I left New York. He was overflowing with happiness, and he could talk about nothing but the woman he loved —how beautiful she was! how clever! how accomplished! how devoted to his mother! In the midst of his rhapsody he was seized by a fit of violent coughing, and I saw the same danger signal in his cheeks which had preceded the break-down in his

senior year. I begged him to take care of himself. With a light laugh he answered that he intended to do so—it was his duty to do so, now that he did not belong to himself.

In the fall, when I came back to the city, I found him in the office of a law firm, the head of which had been an intimate of his father's. The girl he was to marry went one night a week to dine with her grandmother, and he came to me that evening and talked about her. As the cold weather stiffened, his cough became more frequent, and long before Christmas I was greatly alarmed by it. He consulted a distinguished doctor, who told him that he ought to spend the winter in a drier climate—in Colorado, for example.

It was on Christmas eve that year that he brought me the frog that played the trombone. Ever since the first Christmas of our friendship we had made each other little presents.

"This is hardly worth giving," he said, as he placed the china shell on the corner of my desk, where it stands to this day. "But it is quaint and it caught my fancy. Besides, I've a notion that it is the tune of one of Heine's lyrics set by Schubert that the fellow is trying to play. And then I've a certain satisfaction in thinking that I shall be represented here by a performer of marvelous force of lung, since you seem to think my lungs are weak."

A severe cough seized him then, but, when he had

recovered his breath, he laughed lightly, and said: "That's the worst one I've had this week. However, when the spring warms me up again I shall be all right once more. It wasn't on me that the spring poet wrote the epitaph:

'It was a cough
That carried him off;
It was a coffin
They carried him off in."

"You ought to go away for a month at least," I urged. "Take a run down South and fill your lungs with the balsam of the pines."

"That's what my mother wants me to do," he admitted; "and I've half promised to do it. If I go to Florida for January, can you go with me?"

I knew how needful it was for him to escape from the bleakness of our New York winter, so I made a hasty mental review of my engagements. "Yes," I said, "I will go with you."

He held out his hand and clasped mine firmly. "We'll have a good time," he responded, "just we two. But you must promise not to object if I insist on talking about her all the time."

As it turned out, I was able to keep all my engagements, for we never went away together. Before the new year came there was a change in my friend's fortunes. The man who had pretended to invest for them the proceeds of his father's life-insurance policy absconded, leaving nothing behind but debts. For

the support of his mother and himself my friend had only his own small salary. A vacation, however necessary, became impossible, and the marriage, which had been fixed for the spring, was postponed indefinitely. He offered to release the girl, but she refused.

Through a classmate of ours I was able to get my friend a place in the law department of the Denver office of a great insurance company. In the elevated air of Colorado he might regain his strength, and in a new city like Denver he might find a way to mend his fortunes. His mother went with him, of course, and it was beautiful to see her devotion to him. I saw them off.

"She bore the parting very bravely," he said to me. "She is braver than I am, and better in every way. I wish I were more worthy of her. You will go and see her, won't you? There's a good fellow and a good friend. Go and see her now and then, and write and tell me all about her—how she looks and what she says."

I promised, of course, and about once a month I went to see the woman my friend loved. He wrote me every fortnight, but it was often from her that I got the latest news. His health was improving; his cough had gone; Denver agreed with him, and he liked it. He was working hard, and he saw the prospect of advancement close before him. Within two years he hoped to take a month off, and return

to New York and marry her, and bear his bride back to Colorado with him.

When I returned to town the next October I expected to find two or three letters from my friend awaiting me. I found only one, a brief note, telling me that he had been too busy to write the month before, and that he was now too tired with overwork to be able to do more than say how glad he was that I was back again in America, adding that a friend at hand might be farther away than one who was on the other side of the Atlantic. The letter seemed to me not a little constrained in manner. I did not understand it; and with the hope of getting some light by which to interpret its strangeness, I went to call on her. She refused to see me, pleading a headache.

It was a month before I had a reply to my answer to his note, and the reply was as short as the note, and quite as constrained. He told me that he was well enough himself, but that his mother's health worried him, since Denver did not agree with her, and she was pining to be back in New York. He added a postscript, in which he told me that he had dined a few nights before with the local manager of the insurance company, and that he had met the manager's sister, a wealthy widow from California, a most attractive woman, indeed. With needless emphasis he declared that he liked a woman of the world old enough to talk sensibly.

Another month passed before I heard from him again, and Christmas had gone and the new year had almost come. The contents of this letter, written on Christmas eve, when the frog that played the trombone had been sitting on the corner of my desk for just a year, was as startling as its manner was strange. He told me that his engagement was broken off irrevocably.

If my own affairs had permitted it, I should have taken the first train to Denver to discover what had happened. As it was I went again to call on the landlady's daughter. But she refused to see me again. Word was brought me that she was engaged, and begged to be excused.

About a fortnight later I chanced to meet on a street corner the classmate who had got my friend the Denver appointment. I asked if there was any news.

"Isn't there!" was the response. "I should think there was, and lots of it! You know our friend in Denver? Well, we have a telegram this morning: his health is shaky, and so he has resigned his position."

"Resigned his position!" I echoed. "What does that mean?"

"That's what we wanted to know," replied my classmate, "so we telegraphed to our local manager, and he gave us an explanation right off the reel. The manager has a sister who is the widow of a California millionaire, and she has been in Denver for the winter,

and she has met our friend; and for all she is a good ten years older than he is, she has been fascinated by him—you know what a handsome fellow he is—and she's going to marry him next week, and take him to Egypt for his health."

"He's going to marry the California widow?" I asked, in astonishment. "Why, he's enga—" Then I suddenly held my peace.

"He's going to marry the California widow," was the answer,—"or she's going to marry him; it's all the same, I suppose."

Two days later I had a letter from Denver confirming this report. He wrote that he was to be married in ten days to a most estimable lady, and that they were to leave his mother in New York as they passed through. Fortunately he had been able to make arrangements whereby his mother would be able to live hereafter where she pleased, and in comfort. He invited me to come out to Colorado for the wedding, but hardly hoped to persuade me, he said, knowing how pressing my engagements were. But as their steamer sailed on Saturday week they would be at a New York hotel on the Friday night, and he counted on seeing me then.

I went to see him then, and I was shocked by his appearance. He was thin, and his chest was hollower than ever. There were dark lines below his liquid eyes, brighter then than I had ever seen them before. There were two blazing spots on his high cheek-bones.

He coughed oftener than I had ever known him, and the spasms were longer and more violent. His hand was feverishly hot. His manner, too, was restless. To my surprise, he seemed to try to avoid being alone with me. He introduced me to his wife, a dignified, matronly woman with a full figure and a cheerful smile. She had a most motherly manner of looking after him and of anticipating his wants; twice she jumped up to close a door which had been left open behind him. He accepted her devotion as a matter of course, apparently. Once, when she was telling me of their projects—how they were going direct to Egypt to remain till late in the spring, and then to return to Paris for the summer, with a possible run over to London before the season was over—he interrupted her to say that it mattered little where he went or what he did—one place was as good as another.

When I rose to go he came with me out into the hotel corridor, despite his wife's suggestion that there was sure to be a draught there.

He thrust into my hand a note-book. "There," he said, "take that; it's a journal I started to keep, and never did. Of course you can read it if you like. In the pocket you will find a check. I want you to get some things for me after I've gone; I've written down everything. You will do that for me, I know."

I promised to carry out his instructions to the letter.

"Then that's all right," he answered.

At that moment his wife came to the door of their parlor. "I know it must be chilly out in the hall there," she said.

"Oh, I'm coming," he responded.

Then he grasped my fingers firmly in his hot hand. "Good-by, old man," he whispered. "You remember how I used to think the frog that played the trombone was trying to execute a Heine-Schubert song? Well, perhaps it is—I don't know; but what I do know is that it has played a wedding march, after all. And now good-by. God bless you! Go and see my mother as often as you can."

He gave my hand a hearty shake, and went back into the parlor, and his wife shut the door after him.

I had intended to go down to the boat and see him off the next morning, but at breakfast I received a letter from his wife saying that he had passed a very restless night, and that she thought it would excite him still more if I saw him again, and begging me, therefore, not to come to the steamer if such had been my intention. And so it was that he sailed away and I never saw him again.

In the note-book I found a check for five hundred dollars, and a list of the things he wished me to get and to pay for. They were for his mother mostly, but one was a seal-ring for myself. And there was with the check a jeweler's bill, "To articles sent as directed," which I was also requested to pay.

The note-book itself I guarded with care. It was a pocket-journal, and my friend had tried to make it a record of his life for the preceding year. There were entries of letters received and sent, of money earned and spent, of acquaintances made, of business appointments, of dinner engagements, and of visits to the doctor. Evidently his health had been failing fast, and he had been struggling hard to keep the knowledge not only from his mother, but even from himself. While he had set down these outward facts of his life, he had also used the note-book as the record of his inward feelings. To an extent that he little understood, that journal, with its fragmentary entries and its stray thoughts, told the story of his spiritual experience.

Many of the entries were personal, but many were not; they were merely condensations of the thought of the moment as it passed through his mind. Here are two specimens:

"We judge others by the facts of life—by what we hear them say and see them do. We judge ourselves rather by our own feelings—by what we intend and desire and hope to do some day in the future. Thus a poor man may glow with inward satisfaction at the thought of the hospital he is going to build when he gets rich. And a wealthy man can at least pride himself on the fortitude with which he would, if need be, bear the deprivations of poverty."

"To pardon is the best and the bitterest vengeance."

Toward the end of the year the business entries became fewer and fewer, as though he had tired of keeping the record of his doings. But the later pages were far fuller than the earlier of his reflections—sometimes a true thought happily expressed, sometimes, more often than not perhaps, a mere verbal antithesis, such as have furnished forth many an aphorism long before my friend was born. And these later sentiments had a tinge of bitterness lacking in the earlier.

"There are few houses," he wrote, in October, apparently, "where happiness is a permanent boarder; generally it is but a transient guest; and sometimes, indeed, it is only a tramp that knocks at the side door and is refused admittance."

"Many a man forgets his evil deeds so swiftly that he is honestly surprised when any one else recalls them."

Except the directions to me for the expenditure of the five hundred dollars, the last two entries in the book were written on Christmas morning. One of these was the passage which smote me most when I first read it, for it struck me as sadness itself when written by a young man not yet twenty-five:

"If we had nothing else to wish, we should at least wish to die."

At the time I did not seize the full significance of the other passage, longer than this, and far sadder when its meaning was finally grasped.

"The love our parents gave us we do not pay back, nor a tithe of it, even. We may bestow it to our children, but we never render it again to our father and our mother. And what can equal the love of a woman for the son she has borne? No peak is as lofty, and no ocean is as wide; it is fathomless, boundless, immeasurable; it is poured without stint, unceasing and unfailing. And how do we men meet it? We do not even make a pretense of repaying it, most of us. Now and again there may be a son here and there who does what he can for his mother, little as it is, and much as he may despise himself for doing it: and why not? Are there not seven swords in the heart of the Mater Dolorosa? And what sort of a son is he who would add another?"

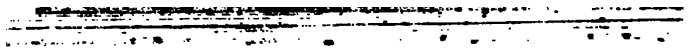
Although I had already begun to guess at the secret of my friend's conduct, a mystery to all others, it was the first of these two final entries in his note-book which came flashing back into my memory one evening toward the end of March, ten weeks or so after he had bidden me good-by and had gone away to Egypt. I was seated in my library, smoking, when there came a ring at the door, and a telegram was handed to me. I laid my cigar down on the brownish-yellow shell, at the crinkled edge of which the green frog was sitting, reaching out his broken arms for the trombone whereon he had played in happier days. I saw that the despatch had come by the cable under the ocean, and I wondered who on the other side of

the Atlantic had news for me that would not keep till a letter could reach me.

I tore open the envelope. The message was dated Alexandria, Egypt, and it was signed by my friend's widow. He had died that morning, and I was asked to break the news to his mother.

(1898)

On an
Errand of Mercy



THE ambulance clanged along, now under the elevated railroad, and now wrenching itself outside to get ahead of a cable-car. With his little bag in his hand, the young doctor sat wondering whether he would know just what to do when the time came. This was his first day of duty as ambulance surgeon, and now he was going to his first call. It was three in the afternoon of an August day, when the hot spell had lasted a week already, and yet the young physician was chill with apprehension as he took stock of himself, and as he had a realizing sense of his own inexperience.

The bullet-headed Irishman who was driving the ambulance as skilfully as became the former owner of a night-hawk cab glanced back at the doctor and sized up the situation.

"There's no knowin' what it is we'll find when we get there," he began. "There's times when it's no aisy job the doctor has. Say you give the man ether, now, or whatever it is you make him sniff, and maybe he's dead when he comes out of it. Where are you then?"

The young man decided instantly that if anything

of that sort should happen to him that afternoon, he would go back to Georgia at once and try for a place in the country store.

"But nothing ever fazed Dr. Chandler," the driver went on. "It's Dr. Chandler's place you're takin' now, ye know that?"

It seemed to the surgeon that the Irishman was making ready to patronize him, or at least to insinuate the new-comer's inferiority to his predecessor, whereupon his sense of humor came to his rescue, and a smile relieved the tension of his nerves as he declared that Dr. Chandler was an honor to his profession.

"He is that!" the driver returned, emphatically, as with a dextrous jerk he swung the ambulance just in front of a cable-car, to the sputtering disgust of the gripman. "An' it's many a dangerous case we've had to handle together, him and me."

"I don't doubt that you were of great assistance," the young Southerner suggested.

"Many's the time he's tould me he never knew what he'd ha' done without me," the Irishman responded. "There was that night, now—the night when the big sailor come off the Roosian ship up in the North River there, an' he got full, an' he fell down the steps of a barber shop, an' he bruck his leg into three paces, so he did; an' that made him mad, the pain of it, an' he was just wild when the ambulance come. Oh, it was a lovely jag he had on him, that

Roosian—a lovely jag! An' it was a daisy scrap we had wid him!"

"What did he do?" asked the surgeon.

"What didn't he do?" the driver replied, laughing at the memory of the scene. "He tried to do the doctor—Dr. Chandler it was, as I tould you. He'd a big knife—it's mortial long knives, too, them Roosians carry—an' he was so full he thought it was Dr. Chandler that was hurtin' him, and he med offer to put his knife in him, when, begorra, I kicked it out of his hand."

"I have often heard Dr. Chandler speak of you," said the doctor, with an involuntary smile, as he recalled several of the good stories that his predecessor had told him of the driver's peculiarities.

"An' why w'u'dn't he?" the Irishman replied. "It's more nor wanst I had to help him out of trouble. An' never a worrd we had in all the months he drove out wid me. But it 'll be some aisy little job we'll have now, I'm thinkin'—a sun-stroke, maybe, or a kid that's got knocked down by a scorcher, or a thrifle of that kind; you'll be able to attend to that yourself aisy enough, no doubt."

To this the young Southerner made no response, for his mind was busy in going over the antidotes for various poisons. Then he aroused himself and shook his shoulders, and laughed at his own preoccupation.

The Irishman did not approve of this. "An' of

coorse," he continued, "it may be a scrap 'twixt a ginny and a Polander; or maybe, now, a coon has gone for a chink wid a razzer, and sliced him most in two, I dunno'."

Then he clanged the bell unexpectedly, and swerved off the track and down a side street toward the river.

The doctor soon found a curious crowd flattening their noses against the windows of a drug-store on a corner of the Boulevard. He sprang off as the driver slowed down to turn and back up.

A policeman stood in the doorway of the pharmacist's, swinging his club by its string as he kept the children outside. He drew back to let the young surgeon pass, saying, as he did so: "It's no use now, I think, Doctor. You are too late."

The body of the man lay flat on the tile pavement of the shop. He was decently dressed, but his shoes were worn and patched. He was a very large man, too, stout even for his length. His cravat had been untied and his collar had been opened. His face was covered with a torn handkerchief.

As the doctor dropped on his knees by the side of the body, the druggist's clerk came from behind the prescription counter—a thin, undersized, freckled youngster, with short red hair and a trembling voice.

"He's dead, ain't he?" asked this apparition.

The doctor finished his examination of the man on the floor, and then he answered, as he rose to his feet: "Yes, he's dead. How did it happen?"

The delivery of the young druggist was hesitating and broken. "Well, it was this way, you see. The boss was out, and I was in charge here, and there wasn't anything doing except at the fountain. Then this man came in; he was in a hurry, and he told me he was feeling faint—kind of suffocated, so he said—and couldn't I give him something. Well, I'm a graduate in pharmacy, you know, and so I fixed him up a little aromatic spirits of ammonia in a glass of soda-water. You know that won't hurt anybody. But just as he took the glass out of my hand his knees gave way and he squashed down on the floor there. The glass broke, and he hadn't paid for the spirits of ammonia, either; and when I got round to him he was dead—at least I thought so, but I rang you up to make sure."

"Yes," the doctor returned, "apparently he died at once — heart failure. Probably he had fatty degeneration, and this heat has been too much for him."

"I don't think any man has a right to come in here and die like that without warning, heart failure or no heart failure, do you?" asked the red-headed assistant. "I don't know what the boss will say. That's the kind of thing that spoils trade, and it ain't any too good here, anyway, with a drug-store 'most every block."

"Do you know who he is?" the doctor inquired.

"I went through his pockets, but he hadn't any

watch nor any letters," the druggist answered; "but he's got about a dollar in change in his pants."

The doctor looked around the shop. The policeman was still in the doorway, and a group of boys and girls blocked the entrance.

"Does anybody here know this man?" asked the surgeon.

A small boy twisted himself under the policeman's arm and slipped into the store. "I know him," he cried, eagerly. "I see him come in. I was here all the time, and I see it all. He's Tim McEcchran."

"Where does he live?" the doctor asked, only to correct himself swiftly—"where did he live?"

"I thought he was dead when I saw him go down like he was sandbagged," said the boy. "He lives just around the corner in Amsterdam Avenue—at least his wife lives there."

The doctor took the address, and with the aid of the policeman he put the body on the stretcher and lifted it into the ambulance. The driver protested against this as unprecedented.

"Sure it's none of our business to take a stiff home!" he declared. "That's no work at all, at all, for an ambulance. Dr. Chandler never done the like in all the months him an' me was together. Begob, I never contracted to drive hearses."

The young Southerner explained that this procedure might not be regular, but it revolted him to leave the body of a fellow-mortal lying where it had

fallen on the floor of a shop. The least he could do, so it seemed to him, was to take it to the dead man's widow, especially since this was scarcely a block out of their way as they returned to the hospital.

The driver kept on grumbling as they drove off. "Sure he give ye no chance at all, at all, Doctor, to go and croak afore iver ye got at him, and you only beginnin' yer work! Dr. Chandler, now, he'd get 'em into the wagon ennyway, an' take chances of there bein' breath in 'em. Three times, divil a less, they died on us on the stretcher there, an' me whippin' like the divil to get 'em into the hospital ennyhow, where it was their own consarn whether they lived or died. That's the place for 'em to die in, an' not in the wagon; but the wagon's better than dyin' before we can get to 'em, an' the divil thank the begrudgers! It's unlucky, so it is; an' by the same token, to-day's Friday, so it is!"

The small boy who had identified the dead man ran alongside of them, accompanied by his admiring mates; and when the ambulance backed up again before a pretentious tenement-house with a brown-stone front and beveled plate-glass doors, the small boy rang Mrs. McEcchran's bell.

"It's the third floor she lives on," he declared.

The janitor came up from the basement and he and the driver carried the stretcher up to Mrs. McEcchran's landing.

The doctor went up before them, and found an

insignificant little old woman waiting for him on the landing.

"Is this Mrs. McEcchran?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered; then, as she saw the burden the men were carrying, she cried: "My God! What's that? What are they bringing it here for?"

The young Southerner managed to withdraw her into the front room of the flat, and he noticed that it was very clean and very tidy.

"I am a doctor," he began, soothingly, "and I am sorry to say that there has been an accident—"

"An accident?" she repeated. "Oh, my God! And is it Tim?"

"You must summon all your courage, Mrs. McEcchran," the doctor returned. "This is a serious matter—a very serious matter."

"Is he hurt very bad?" she cried. "Is it dangerous?"

"I may as well tell you the truth, Mrs. McEcchran," said the physician. "I cannot say that your husband will ever be able to be out again."

By that time the stretcher had been brought into the room, with the body on it entirely covered by a blanket.

"You don't mean to tell me that he is going to die?" she shrieked, wringing her hands. "Don't say that, Doctor! don't say that!"

The bearers set the stretcher down, and the woman threw herself on her knees beside it.

"Tim!" she cried. "Speak to me, Tim!"

Getting no response, she got to her feet and turned to the surgeon. "You don't mean he's dead?" And the last word died away in a wail.

"I'm afraid there is no hope for him," the doctor replied.

"He's dead! Tim's dead! Oh, my God!" she said, and then she dropped into a chair and threw her apron over her head and rocked to and fro, sobbing and mourning.

The young Southerner was not yet hardened to such sights, and his heart was sore with sympathy. Yet it seemed to him that the woman's emotion was so violent that it would not last long.

While he was getting ready to have the body removed from the stretcher to a bed in one of the other rooms, Mrs. McEcchran unexpectedly pulled the apron from her head.

"Can I look at him?" she asked, as she slipped to the side of the body and stealthily lifted a corner of the covering to peek in. Suddenly she pulled it back abruptly. "Why, this ain't Tim!" she cried.

"That is not your husband?" asked the doctor, in astonishment. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure!" she answered, laughing hysterically. "Of course I'm sure! As if I didn't know Tim, the father of my children! Why, this ain't even like him!"

The doctor did not know what to say. "Allow me

to congratulate you, madam," he began. "No doubt Mr. McEcchran is still alive and well; no doubt he will return to you. But if this is not your husband, whose husband is he?"

The room had filled with the neighbors, and in the crowd the small boy who had brought them there made his escape.

"Can any one tell me who this is?" the surgeon asked.

"I knew that weren't Mr. McEcchran as soon as I see him," said another boy. "That's Mr. Carroll."

"And where does—did Mr. Carroll live?" the doctor pursued, repenting already of his zeal as he foresaw a repetition of the same painful scene in some other tenement-house.

"It's only two blocks off—on the Boulevard," explained the second boy. "It's over a saloon on the corner. I'll show you if I can ride on the wagon."

"Very well," agreed the doctor; and the body was carried down and placed again in the ambulance.

As the ambulance started he overheard one little girl say to another: "He was killed in a blast! My! ain't it awful? It blew his legs off!"

To which the other little girl answered, "But I saw both his boots as they carried him out."

And the first little girl then explained: "Oh, I guess they put his legs back in place so as not to hurt his wife's feelings. Turrible, ain't it?"

When the ambulance started, the driver began

"MY! AIN'T IT AWFUL? IT BLEW HIS LEGS OFF!"

grumbling again: "It's not Dr. Chandler that 'ud have a thing like this happen to him. Him an' me never went traipsing round wid a corp that didn't belong to nobody. We knew enough to take it where the wake was waitin'."

The boy on the box with the driver guided the ambulance to a two-story wooden shanty with a rickety stairway outside leading up to the second floor.

He sprang down as the ambulance backed up, and he pointed out to the doctor the sign at the foot of these external steps—"Martin Carroll, Photographer."

"That's where he belongs," the boy explained. "He sleeps in the gallery up there. The saloon belongs to a Dutchman that married his sister. This is the place all right, if it really is Mr. Carroll."

"What do you mean by that?" shouted the doctor. "Are you not sure about it?"

"I ain't certain sure," the fellow replied. "I ain't as sure as I was first off. But I think it's Mr. Carroll. Leastways, if it ain't, it looks like him!"

It was with much dissatisfaction at this doubtfulness of his guide that the doctor helped the driver slide out the stretcher.

Then the side door of the saloon under the landing of the outside stairs opened and a stocky little German came out.

"What's this? What's this?" he asked.

The young surgeon began his explanation again. "This is where Mr. Carroll lived, isn't it? Well, I am sorry to say there has been an accident, and—"

"Is that Martin there?" interrupted the German.

"Yes," the Southerner replied, "and I'm afraid it is a serious case—a pretty serious case—"

"Is he dead?" broke in the saloon-keeper again.

"He is dead," the doctor answered.

"Then why didn't you say so?" asked the short man harshly. "Why waste all that time talking if he's dead?"

The Southerner was inclined to resent this rudeness, but he checked himself.

"I understand that you are Mr. Carroll's brother-in-law," he began again, "so I suppose I can leave the body in your charge—"

The German went over to the stretcher and turned down the blanket.

"No, you don't leave him here," he declared. "I'm not going to take him. This ain't my sister's husband!"

"This is not Mr. Carroll?" and this time the doctor looked around for the boy who had misinformed him. "I was told it was."

"The man who told you was a liar, that's all. This ain't Martin Carroll, and the sooner you take him away the better. That's what I say," declared the saloon-keeper, going back to his work.

The doctor looked around in disgust. What he

had to do now was to take the body to the morgue, and that revolted him. It seemed to him an insult to the dead and an outrage toward the dead man's family. Yet he had no other course of action open to him, and he was beginning to be impatient to have done with the thing. The week of hot weather had worn on his nerves also, and he wanted to be back again in the cool hospital out of the oven of the streets.

As he and the driver were about to lift up the stretcher again, a man in overalls stepped up to the body and looked at it attentively.

"It's Dick O'Donough!" he said at once. "Poor old Dick! It's a sad day for her—and her that excitable!"

"Do you know him?" asked the doctor.

"Don't I?" returned the man in overalls, a thin, elderly man, with wisps of hair beneath his chin and a shrewd, weazened face. "It's Dick O'Donough!"

"But are you sure of it?" the young surgeon insisted. "We've had two mistakes already."

"Sure of it?" repeated the other. "Of course I'm sure of it! Didn't I work alongside of him for five years? And isn't that the scar on him he got when the wheel broke?" And he lifted the dead man's hair and showed a cicatrix on the temple.

"Very well," said the doctor. "If you are sure, where did he live?"

"It's only a little way."

"I'm glad of that. Can you show us?"

"I can that," replied the man in overalls.

"Then jump in front," said the doctor.

As they started again, the driver grumbled once more. "Begorra, April Day's a fool to ye," he began. "Them parvarse gossoons, now, if I got howld of 'em, they'd know what it was hurt 'em, I'm thinkin'."

The man in overalls directed them to a shabby double tenement in a side street swarming with children. There was a Chinese laundry on one side of the doorway, and on the other side a bakery. The door stood open, and the hallway was dark and dirty.

"It's a sad day it 'll be for Mrs. O'Donough," sighed the man in overalls. "I don't know what it is she's got, but she's very queer, now, very queer."

He went into the bakery and got a man to help the driver carry up the stretcher. Women came out of the shops on both sides of the street, and leaned out of their windows with babies in their arms, and stepped out on the fire-escapes. There were banana peelings and crumpled newspapers and rubbish of one sort or another scattered in the street, and the savor of it all was unpleasant even to a man who was no stranger to the casual ward of a hospital.

The man in overalls went up-stairs with the doctor, warning him where a step was broken or where a bit of the hand-rail was missing. They groped their way along the passage on the first floor and knocked,

The door opened suddenly, and they saw an ill-furnished room, glaring with the sun reflected from its white walls. Two women stood just within the door. One was tall and spare, with gray streaks in her coal-black hair, and with piercing black eyes; the other was a comfortable body with a cheerful smile.

"That's Mrs. O'Donough," said the doctor's guide —"the tall one. See the eyes of her now! The other's a neighbor woman, who's with her a good deal, she's that excitable."

The doctor stepped into the room, and began once more to break the news. "This is Mrs. O'Donough, is it not?" he said. "I'm a doctor, and I am sorry to have to say there has been an accident, and Mr. O'Donough is—is under treatment."

Here the driver and the man from the bakery brought in the stretcher.

When the tall woman saw this she gripped the arm of the other and hissed out, "Is it *it*?" Then she turned her back on the body and sank her head on her friend's shoulder.

The other woman made signs to the doctor to say little or nothing.

The driver and the baker took a thin counterpane off the bed, which stood against the wall. Then they lifted the body from the stretcher to the bed, and covered it with the counterpane.

The doctor did not know what to say in the face

of the signals he was receiving from the widow's friend.

"In case I can be of any assistance at any time," he suggested—and then Mrs. O'Donough lifted her head and looked at him with her burning eyes—"if I can be of service, do not hesitate to call on me. Here is my card."

As he felt his way down-stairs again he heard a hand-organ break out suddenly into a strident waltz.

When he came out into the street a few little children were dancing in couples, although most of them stood around the ambulance, gazing with morbid curiosity at the driver as he replaced the stretcher. At the door of the baker's shop stood a knot of women talking it over; but in the Chinese laundry the irons went back and forth steadily, with no interest in what might happen in the street outside.

As the doctor took his seat in the vehicle a shriek came from the room he had just left—a shuddering, heartrending wail—then another—and then there was silence.

The ambulance started forward, the bell clanged to clear the way, the horse broke into a trot, and in a minute or two they turned into the broad avenue.

Then the driver looked at the doctor. "The widdy's takin' it harrd, I'm thinkin', but she'll get over it before the wake," he said. "An' it's good lungs she has, ennyhow."

(1898)

In a Bob-tail Car

IT was about noon of a dark day late in September, and a long-threatened drizzle of hail chilled the air, as Harry Brackett came out of the Apollo House and stood on the corner of Fourth Avenue, waiting for a cross-town car. He was going down-town to the office of the *Gotham Gazette* to write up an interview he had just had with the latest British invader of these United States, Lady Smith-Smith, the fair authoress of the very popular novel *Smile and be a Villain Still*, five rival editions of which were then for sale everywhere in New York. Harry Brackett intended to ride past Union Square to Sixth Avenue in the cross-town car, and then to go to the *Gotham Gazette* by the elevated railway, so he transferred ten cents for the fare of the latter and five cents for the fare of the former from his waistcoat pocket to a little pocket in his overcoat. Then he buttoned the overcoat tightly about him, as the raw wind blew harshly across the city from river to river. He looked down the street for the car; it was afar off, on the other side of Third Avenue, and he was standing on the corner of Fourth Avenue.

"A bob-tail car," said Harry Brackett to himself, "is like a policeman: it is never here just when it is

wanted. And yet it is a necessary evil—like the policeman again. Perhaps there is here a philosophical thought that might be worked up as a comic editorial article for the fifth column. 'The Bob-tail Car'—why, the very name is humorous. And there are lots of things to be said about it. For instance, I can get something out of the suggestion that the heart of a coquette is like a bob-tail car, there is always room for one more; but I suppose I must not venture on any pun about 'ringing the belle.' Then I can say that the bob-tail car is a one-horse concern, and is therefore a victim of the healthy American hatred of one-horse concerns. It has no past; no gentleman of the road ever robbed its passengers; no road-agent nowadays would think of 'holding it up.' Perhaps that's why there is no poetry about a bob-tail car, as there is about a stage-coach. Even Rudolph Vernon, the most modern of professional poets, wouldn't dream of writing verses on 'Riding in a Bob-tail Car.' Wasn't it Heine who said that the monks of the Middle Ages thought that Greek was a personal invention of the devil, and that he agreed with them? That's what the bob-tail car is—a personal invention of the devil. The stove-pipe hat, the frying-pan, the tenement-house, and the bob-tail car—these are the choicest and the chief of the devil's gifts to New York. Why doesn't that car come? confound it! Although it cannot swear itself, it is the cause of much swearing!"

Just then the car came lumbering along and bumping with a repeated jar as its track crossed the tracks on Fourth Avenue. Harry Brackett jumped on it as it passed the corner where he stood. His example was followed by a stranger, who took the seat opposite to him.

As the car sped along toward Broadway, Harry Brackett mechanically read, as he had read a dozen times before, the printed request to place the exact fare in the box. "Suppose I don't put it in?" he mused; "what will happen? The driver will ask for it—if he has time and happens to think of it. This is very tempting to a man who wants to try the Virginian plan of readjusting his debts. Here is just the opportunity for any one addicted to petty larceny. I think I shall call that article 'The Bob-tail Car as a Demoralizer.' It is most demoralizing for a man to feel that he can probably evade the payment of his fare, since there is no conductor to ask for it. However, I suppose the main reliance of the company is on the honesty of the individual citizen who would rather pay his debts than not. I doubt if there is any need to dun the average American for five cents."

Harry Brackett lowered his eyes from the printed notice at which he had been staring unconsciously for a minute, and they fell on the man sitting opposite to him—the man who had entered the car as he did.

"I wonder if he is the average American?" thought

Brackett. "He hasn't paid his fare yet. I wonder if he will? It isn't my business to dun him for it, and yet I'd like to know whether his intentions are honorable or not."

The car turned sharply into Broadway, and then came to a halt to allow two young ladies to enter. A third young lady escorted them to the car, and kissed them affectionately, and said:

"Good-by! You will be *sure* to come again! I have enjoyed your visit so much."

Then the two young ladies kissed her, and they said, both speaking at once, and very rapidly:

"Oh yes. We've had *such* a good time! We'll write you! And you *must* come out to Orange and see us soon! Good-by! Good-by! Remember us to your mother! *Good-by!*"

At last the sweet sorrow of this parting was over; the third young lady withdrew to the sidewalk; the two young ladies came inside the car; the other passengers breathed more freely; the man opposite to Harry Brackett winked at him slyly, and the car went on again.

There was a vacant seat on the side of the car opposite to Harry Brackett—or, at least, there would have been one if the ladies on that side had not, with characteristic coolness, spread out their skirts so as to occupy the whole space. The two young ladies stood for a moment after they had entered the car; they looked for a seat, but no one of the other ladies made

a sign of moving to make room for them. The man opposite to Harry Brackett rose and proffered his seat. They did not thank him, or even so much as look at him.

"*You* take it, Nelly," said one.

"I sha'n't do anything of the sort. I'm not a *bit* tired!" returned the other. "I *insist* on your sitting down!"

"But I'm not tired *now*."

"Louise Valeria Munson," her friend declared, with humorous emphasis, "if you don't sit right down, I'll call a *policeman!*"

"Well, I guess there's room for us both," said Louise Valeria Munson; "I'm sure there ought to be."

By this time some of the other ladies on the seat had discovered that they were perhaps taking up a little more than their fair share of space, and there was a readjustment of frontier. The vacancy was slightly broadened, and both young ladies sat down.

The man who had got in just after Harry Brackett and who had given up his seat stood in the center of the car with his hand through a strap. But he made no effort to pay his fare. The driver rang his bell, the passengers looked at each other inquiringly, and one of the two young ladies who had just seated themselves produced a dime, which was passed along and dropped into the fare-box in accordance with the printed instructions of the company.

Three ladies left the car just before it turned into Fourteenth Street; and after it had rounded the curve two elderly gentlemen entered and sat down by the side of Harry Brackett. The man who had not paid his fare kindly volunteered to drop their money into the box, but did not put in any of his own. Harry Brackett was certain of this, for he had watched him closely.

The two elderly gentlemen continued a conversation began before they entered the car. "I'll tell you," said one of them, so loudly that Harry Brackett could not help overhearing, "the most remarkable thing that man Skinner ever did. One day he got caught in one of his amusing little swindles; by some slip-up of his ingenuity he did not allow himself quite rope enough, and so he was brought up with a round turn in the Tombs. He got two years in Sing Sing, but he never went up at all—he served his time by substitute!"

"What?" cried his companion, in surprise.

"He did!" answered the first speaker. "That's just what he did! He had a substitute to go to State's Prison for him, while he went up to Albany to work for his own pardon!"

"How did he manage that?" asked the other, in involuntary admiration before so splendid an audacity.

"You've no idea how fertile Skinner was in devices of all kinds," replied the gentleman who was telling the story. "He got out on bail, and he arranged for a

light sentence if he pleaded guilty. Then one day, suddenly, a man came into court, giving himself up as Skinner, pleading guilty, and asking for immediate sentence. Of course, nobody inquired too curiously into the identity of a self-surrendered prisoner who wanted to go to Sing Sing. Well—"

The car stopped at the corner of Fifth Avenue, several passengers alighted, and a party of three ladies came in. There were two vacant seats by the side of Harry Brackett, and as he thought these three ladies wished to sit together, he gave up his place and took another farther down the car. Here he found himself again opposite the man who had entered the car almost simultaneously with him, and who had not yet paid his fare. Harry Brackett wondered whether this attempt to steal a ride was intentional or whether it was merely inadvertent. His consideration of this metaphysical problem was interrupted by another conversation. His right-hand neighbor, who was apparently a physician, was telling the friend next to him of the strange desires of convalescents.

"I think," said he, "that the queerest request I ever heard was down in Connecticut. There was a man there, a day-laborer, but a fine young fellow, who had a crowbar driven clean through his head by a forgotten blast. Well, I happened to be the first doctor on the spot, and it was nip-and-tuck whether anything could be done for him; it was a most interesting case. But he was in glorious condition physi-

cally. I found out afterward that he was the champion sprint-runner of the place. I got him into the nearest hotel, and in time I managed to patch him up as best I could. At last we pulled him through, and the day came when I was able to tell him that I thought he would recover, and that he was quite out of danger, and that all he had to do was to get his strength back again as fast as he could, and he would be all right again soon. He was lying in bed, emaciated and speechless, when I said this, and when I added that he could have anything to eat he might fancy, his eyes brightened and his lips moved. 'Is there anything in particular you would prefer?' I asked him, and his lips moved again as though he had a wish to express. You see, he hadn't spoken once since the accident, but he seemed to be trying to find his tongue; so I bent over the bed and put my head over his mouth, and finally I heard a faint voice saying, 'Quail on toast!' and as I drew back in surprise, he gave me a wink. Feeble as his tones were, there was infinite gusto in the way he said the words. I suppose he had never had quail on toast in all his life; probably he had dreamed of it as an unattainable luxury."

"Did he get it?" asked the doctor's friend.

"He got it every day," answered the doctor, "until he said he didn't want any more. I remember another man who—"

But now, with many a jolt and jar, the car was

rattling noisily across Sixth Avenue under the dripping shadow of the station of the elevated railway. Harry Brackett rose to his feet, and as he did so he glanced again at the man opposite to him, to see if, even then, at the eleventh hour, he did intend to pay his fare. But the man caught Harry Brackett's eye hardily, and looked him in the face, with a curiously knowing smile.

There was something very odd about the expression of the man's face, so Harry Brackett thought, as he left the car and began to mount the steps which led to the station of the elevated railroad. He could not help thinking that there was a queer suggestion in that smile—a suggestion of a certain complicity on his part: it was as though the owner of the smile had ventured to hint that they were birds of a feather.

"Confound his impudence!" said Harry Brackett to himself, as he stood before the window of the ticket-agent.

Then he put his fingers into the little pocket in his overcoat and took from it a ten-cent piece and a five-cent piece. And he knew at once why the man opposite had smiled so impertinently—it was the smile of the pot at the kettle.

(1886)

In the Small Hours

SUDDENLY he found himself wide awake. He had been lost in sleep, dreamless and spaceless; and now, without warning, his slumber had left him abruptly and for no reason that he could guess. Although he strained his ear, he caught the echo of no unusual sound. He listened in vague doubt whether there might not be some one moving about in the apartment; but he could hear nothing except the shrill creak of the brakes of a train on the elevated railroad nearly a block away. Wilson Carpenter was in the habit of observing his own feelings, and he was surprised to note that he did not really expect to detect any physical cause for his unexpected awakening. Sleep had left him as inexplicably as it had swiftly.

He lay there in bed with no restlessness; he heard the regular breathing of his wife, who was sleeping at his side; he saw the faint illumination from the door open into the next room where the baby was also asleep. He looked toward the window, but no ray of light was yet visible; and he guessed it to be about four o'clock in the morning, perhaps a little earlier. In that case he had not been in bed more than two or three hours at the most. He wondered why he

had waked thus unexpectedly, since he had had a fatiguing day. Perhaps it was the excitement—there was no doubt that he had had his full share of excitement that evening—and he thrilled again as he recalled the delicious sensation of dull dread yielding at last to the certainty of success.

He had played for a heavy stake and he had won. That was just what he had been doing—gambling with fate, throwing dice with fortune itself. That was what every dramatic author had to do every time he brought out a new play. The production of a piece at an important New York theater was a venture as aleatory almost as cutting a pack of cards, and the odds were always against the dramatist. And as the young man quietly recalled the events of the evening it seemed to him that the excitement of those who engineer corners in Wall Street must be like his own anxiety while the future of his drama hung in the balance, only theirs could not but be less keen than his, less poignant, for he was playing his game with men and women, while what they touched were but inanimate stocks. His winning depended upon the actors and actresses who had bodied forth his conception. A single lapse of memory or a single slip of the tongue, and the very sceptical audience of the first night might laugh in the wrong place, and so cut themselves off from sympathy; and all his labor would shrivel before his eyes. Of a truth it is the ordeal by fire that the dramatist must undergo; and

there had been moments that long, swift evening when he had felt as though he were tied to the stake and awaiting only the haggard squaw who was to apply the torch.

Now the trial was over and the cause was gained. There had been too many war-pieces of late, so the croakers urged, and the public would not stand another drama of the Rebellion. But he had not been greatly discouraged, for in his play the military scenes were but the setting for a story of everyday heroism, of human conflict, of man's conquest of himself. It was the simple strength of this story that had caught the spectators before the first act was half over and held them breathless as situation followed situation. At the adroitly spaced comic scenes the audience had gladly relaxed, joyously relieving the emotional strain with welcome laughter. The future of the play was beyond all question; of that the author felt assured, judging not so much by the mere applause as by the tensity of the interest aroused, and by the long-drawn sigh of suspense he had heard so often in the course of the evening. He did not dread the acrid criticisms he knew he should find in some of the morning papers, the writers of which would be bitterer than usual, since the writer of the new play had been a newspaper man himself.

The author of *A Bold Stroke* knew what its success meant to him. It meant a fortune. The play would perhaps run the season out in New York, and this

was only the middle of October. With matinées on Wednesday as well as on Saturday, two hundred performances in the city were not impossible. Then next season there would be at least two companies on the road. He ought to make $25,000 by the piece, and perhaps more. The long struggle just to keep his head above water, just to get his daily bread, just to make both ends meet—that was over forever. He could move out of the little Harlem flat to which he had brought his bride two years before; and he could soon get her the house she was longing for somewhere in the country, near New York, where the baby could grow up under the trees.

The success of the play meant more than mere money, so the ambitious young author was thinking as he lay there sleepless. It meant praise, too—and praise was pleasant. It meant recognition—and recognition was better than praise, for it would open other opportunities. The money he made by the play would give him a home, and also leisure for thought and for adequate preparation before he began his next piece. He had done his best in writing the war-drama; he had spared no pains and neglected no possibility of improvement; it was as good as he could make it. But there were other plays he had in mind, making a different appeal, quieter than his military piece, subtler; and these he could now risk writing, since the managers would believe in him after the triumph of *A Bold Stroke.*

It would be possible for him hereafter to do what he wanted to do and what he believed himself best fitted to do. It had always seemed to him that New York opened an infinity of vistas to the dramatist. He intended to seize some of this opulent material and to set on the stage the life of the great city as he had seen it during his five years of journalism. He knew that it did a man good to be a reporter for a little while, if he had the courage to cut himself loose before it was too late, before journalism had corroded its stigma. His reporting had taken him into strange places now and again; but it had also taken him into the homes of the plain people who make New York what it is. Society, as Society was described in the Sunday papers, he knew little about, and he cared less; he was not a snob, if he knew himself. But humanity was unfailingly interesting and unendingly instructive; and it was more interesting and more instructive in the factories and in the tenements than it was in the immense mansions on Lenox Hill.

His work as a reporter had not only sharpened his eyes and broadened his sympathies; it had led him to see things that made him think. He had not inherited his New England conscience for nothing; and his college studies in sociology, that seemed so bare to him as an undergraduate, had taken on a new aspect since he had seen for himself the actual working of the inexorable laws of life. To sneer at the reform-

ers who were endeavoring to make the world better had not been easy for him, even when he was straining to achieve the false brilliance of the star reporter; and now that he was free to say what he thought, he was going to seize the first opportunity to help along the good cause, to show those rich enough to sit in the good seat in the theater that the boy perched up in the gallery in his shirt-sleeves was also a man and a brother.

The young playwright held that a play ought to be amusing, of course, but he held also that it might give the spectators something to think about after they got home. He was going to utilize his opportunity to show how many failures there are, and how many there must be if the fittest is to survive, and how hard it is to fail, how bitter, how pitiful! With an effort he refrained from saying out loud enough to waken his wife the quotation that floated back to his memory:

> Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
> Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
> The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
> The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

His own success, now it had come, found him wondering at it. He was a modest young fellow at bottom, and he really did not know why he had attained the prize so many were striving to grasp. Probably it was due to the sturdiness of the stock he

came from; and he was glad that his ancestors had lived cleanly and had left him a healthy body and a sober mind. His father and his mother had survived long enough to see him through college and started in newspaper work in New York. They had been old-fashioned in their ways, and he was aware that they might not have approved altogether of his choice of a profession, since it would have seemed very strange to them that a son of theirs should earn his living by writing plays. Yet he grieved that they had gone before he was able to repay any of the sacrifices they had made for him; it was the one blot on his good-fortune that he could not share it with them in the future.

The future! Yes, the future was in his power at last. As he lay there in the darkness he said to himself that all his ambitions were now almost within his grasp. He was young and well educated; he had proved ability and true courage; he had friends; he had a wife whom he loved and who loved him; his first-born was a son, already almost able to walk. Never before had his prospects appeared so smiling, and never before had he foreseen how his hopes might be fulfilled. And yet now, as he thought of the future, for the first time his pulse did not beat faster. When it was plain to him that he might soon have the most of the things he cared for, he found himself asking whether, after all, he really did care for them so much. He was happy, but just then his happiness was pas-

sive. The future might be left to take care of itself all in good time. He was wide awake, yet he had almost the languor of slumber; it surprised him to find himself thus unenergetic and not wanting to be roused to battle, even if the enemy were in sight. He thought of the Nirvana that the Oriental philosophers sought to gain as the final good; and he asked himself if perhaps the West had not still something to learn from the East.

Afar, in the silence of the night, he heard the faint clang of an ambulance-bell, and he began to think of the huge city now sunk in slumber all around him. He had nearly four million fellow-citizens; and in an hour or two or three they would awaken and go forth to labor. They would fill the day with struggle, vying one with another, each trying to make his footing secure; and now and again one of them would fall and be crushed to the ground. They would go to bed again at night, wearied out, and they would sleep again, and waken again, and begin the battle again. Most of them would take part in the combat all in vain, since only a few of them could hope to escape from the fight unvanquished. Most of them would fall by the wayside or be trampled under foot on the highroad. Most of them would be beaten in the battle and would drop out of the fight, wounded unto death. And for the first time all this ceaseless turmoil and unending warfare seemed to him futile and purposeless.

What was victory but a chance to engage again in the combat? To win to-day was but to have a right to enter the fray again to-morrow. His triumph that evening in the theater only opened the door for him; and if he was to hold his own he must make ready to wrestle again and again. Each time the effort would be harder than the last. And at the end, what? He would be richer in money, perhaps, but just then money seemed to have no absolute value. He would do good, perhaps; but perhaps also he might do harm, for he knew himself not to be infallible. He would not be more contented, he feared, for he had discovered already that although success is less bitter than failure, it rarely brings complete satisfaction. If it were contentment that he really was seeking, why not be satisfied now with what he had won? Why not quit? Why not step out of the ranks and throw down his musket and get out of the way and leave the fighting to those who had a stomach for it?

As he asked himself these questions a gray shroud of melancholy was wrapped about him and all the brightness of youth was quenched in him. Probably this was the inevitable reaction after the strain of his long effort. But none the less it left him looking forward to the end of his life, and he saw himself withered and racked with pain; he saw his young wife worn and ugly, perhaps dead—and the ghastly vision of the grave glimpsed before him; he saw his boy dead also, dead in youth; and he saw himself

left alone and lonely in his old age, and still struggling, struggling, struggling in vain and forever.

Then he became morbid even, and he felt he was truly alone now, as every one of us must be always. He loved his wife and she loved him, and there was sympathy and understanding between them; but he doubted if he really knew her, for he felt sure she did not really know him. There were thoughts in his heart sometimes that he was glad she did not guess; and no doubt she had emotions and sentiments she did not reveal to him. After all, every human being must be a self-contained and repellent entity; and no two of them can ever feel alike or think alike. He and his wife came of different stocks, with a different training, with a different experience of life, with different ideals; and although they were united in love, they could not but be separate and distinct to all eternity. And as his wife was of another sex from his, so his boy was of another generation, certain to grow up with other tastes and other aspirations.

Wilson Carpenter's marriage had been happy, and his boy was all he could wish,—and yet—and yet— Is this all that life can give a man? A little joy for the few who are fortunate, a little pleasure, and then —and then— For the first time he understood how it was that a happy man sometimes commits suicide. And he smiled as he thought that if he wished to choose death at the instant of life when the outsider would suppose his future to be brightest, now was the

moment. He knew that there ought to be a revolver in the upper drawer of the table at the side of the bed. He turned gently; and then he lay back again, smiling bitterly at his own foolishness.

A heavy wagon rumbled along down the next street, and he heard also the whistle of a train on the river-front. These signs of returning day did not interest him at that moment when—so it seemed to him, although he was aware this was perfectly unreasonable—when he was at a crisis in his life.

Then there came to him another quatrain of Omar's, a quatrain he had often quoted with joy in its stern vigor and its lofty resolve:

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

And youth came to his rescue again, and hope rose within him once more; and his interest in the eternal conflict of humanity sprang up as keen as ever.

The mood of craven surrender passed from him as abruptly as it had come, leaving him older, and with a vague impression as though he had had a strange and unnatural experience. He knew again that life is infinitely various, and that it is worth while for its own sake; and he wondered how it was that he had ever doubted it. Even if struggle is the rule of our existence in this world, the fight is its

own reward; it brings its own guerdon; it gives a zest to life; and sometimes it even takes the sting from defeat. The ardor of the combat is bracing; and fate is a foeman worthy of every man's steel.

So long as a man does his best always, his pay is secure; and the ultimate success or failure matters little after all, for, though he be the sport of circumstance, he is the master of himself. To be alone —in youth or in age—is not the worst thing that can befall, if the man is not ashamed of the companionship of his own soul. If his spirit is unafraid and ready to brave the bludgeon of chance, then has man a stanch friend in himself, and he can boldly front whatever the future has in store for him. Only a thin-blooded weakling casts down his weapons for nothing and flees around the arena; the least that a man of even ordinary courage can do is to stand to his arms and to fight for his life to the end.

Wilson Carpenter had no idea how long it was that he had been lying awake motionless, staring at the ceiling. There were signs of dawn now, and he heard a cart rattle briskly up to the house next door.

Perhaps his wife heard this also, for she turned and put out one arm caressingly, smiling at him in her sleep. He took her hand in his gently and held it. Peace descended upon him, and his brain ceased to torment itself with the future or with the present or with the past.

He was conscious of no effort not to think, nor indeed of any unfulfilled desire on his part. It seemed to him that he was floating lazily on a summer sea, not becalmed, but bound for no destination. And before he knew it, he was again asleep.

(1899)

Her Letter
to His Second Wife

SHE was gayly humming a lilting tune as she flitted about the spacious sitting-room, warm with the mellow sunshine of the fall. From the broad bow-window she looked down on the reddened maples in Gramercy Park, where a few lingering leaves were dancing in the fitful autumn breeze. Turning away with a graceful, bird-like movement, she floated across to the corner and glanced again into a tall and narrow mirror set in the door of a huge wardrobe. She smiled back at the pretty face she saw there reflected. Then she laughed out merrily, that she had caught herself again at her old trick. Yet she did not turn away until she had captured two or three vagrant wisps of her pale-gold hair, twisting them back into conformity with their fellows. When at last she glided off with a smile still lingering on her dainty little mouth, the whole room seemed to be illuminated by her exuberant happiness.

And this was strong testimony to the brightness of the bride herself, for there was nothing else attractive in that sitting-room or in the rest of the house. The furniture was stiff and old-fashioned throughout, and the hangings were everywhere heavy and somber,

The mantelpiece was of staring white marble; and on each side of this was a tall bookcase of solid black walnut highly varnished and overladen with misplaced ornament. The rectangular chairs were covered with faded maroon reps. The window curtains were of raw silk, thickly lined and held back by cords with black-walnut tassels. The least forbidding object in the room was a shabby little desk, of which the scratched white paint contrasted sharply with the dull decorum of the other furniture.

The bride had brought this desk from the home of her youth to her husband's house, and she cherished it as a possession of her girlhood. By the side of it was a low, cane-backed rocking-chair, and in this she sat herself down at last. A small rectangular package was almost under her hand on the corner of the desk; and she opened it eagerly and blushed prettily as she discovered it to contain her new visiting-cards—"Mrs. John Blackstock." She repeated the name to herself with satisfaction at its sonorous dignity. *John Blackstock* seemed to her exactly the name that suited her husband, with his gentleness and his strength. Next to the cards was another package, a belated present from a schoolmate; it contained a silver-mounted calendar. She held it in her hand and counted back the days to her wedding—just twenty, and it seemed to her hardly a week. Then she remarked that in less than a fortnight it would be Thanksgiving; and she thought at once of the many

blessings she would have to give thanks for this year, many more than ever before—above all, for John!

Suddenly it struck her that a year could make startling changes in a woman's life—or even half a year. Twelve months ago in the New England mill-town where her parents lived she had no thought of ever coming to New York to stay or of marrying soon. Last Thanksgiving she had never seen John; and indeed, it was not till long after Decoration Day that she had first heard his name; and now there was a plain gold ring on her finger, and John and she were man and wife. If she had not accepted Mary Morton's invitation she might never have met John! She shuddered at the fatal possibility; and she marveled how the long happiness of a woman's life might hang on a mere chance. When the Mortons had asked her to go to Saratoga with them to spend the Fourth of July she had hesitated, and she came near refusing after Mary had said that Mr. Blackstock was going to be there, and that he was a widower now, and that there was a chance for her. She detested that kind of talk and thought it was always in bad taste. But then Mary Morton was a dear, good girl; and it was natural that Mr. Morton should be interested in Mr. Blackstock, since Mr. Blackstock was the head of the New York house that took all the output of the Morton mills. She had decided to go to Saratoga at last, partly because her father thought it would amuse her, and partly just to show Mary Morton

that she was not the kind of girl to be thrown at a man's head.

The morning after their arrival in Saratoga, when they were walking in Congress Park, Mary had pointed out John to her, and she remembered that he had seemed to her very old. Of course, he was not really old; she knew now that he was just forty; but she was only twenty herself, and at first sight he had impressed her as an elderly man. That evening he came over to their hotel to call on Mr. Morton, and he was presented to her. Mary had been telling her how his wife had died the summer before, and how he had been inconsolable; and so she could not help sympathizing with him, nor could she deny that he had seemed to be taken with her from the beginning. Instead of talking to Mr. Morton or to Mary, he kept turning to her and asking her opinion. Before he got up to go he had invited them all to go down to the lake with him the next day for a fish dinner. Twenty-four hours later he had asked her to drive with him alone, and while she was wavering Mary had accepted for her; and really she did not see why she should not go with him. She had liked him from the first, he was so quiet and reserved, and then he had been so lonely since the death of his wife. On Sunday he had taken her to church; and the next morning he had moved over to their hotel. She had been afraid that Mary might tease her; but she did not care, for she was getting to like to have

him attentive to her. She had made up her mind not to pay any regard to anything Mary might say. What Mary did say was to ask her to stay on another fortnight. She wondered now what would have happened if her father had refused his permission. As it was, she remained in Saratoga two weeks longer —and so did John, though Mr. Morton said that the senior partner of Blackstock, Rawlings & Cameron had lots of things to do in New York. Then Mary used to smile and to tell her husband that Mr. Blackstock had more pressing business on hand in Saratoga than in New York.

At last they all started for home again, and John had come with them as far as Albany. When he held her hand just as the car was going and said good-by, it was rather abruptly that he asked her if he might come and see her at Norwich—and he had blushed as he explained that he might be called there soon on important business.

As the picture of this scene rose before the eyes of the young bride she smiled again. She knew now what she had guessed then—that she was the important business that was bringing the senior partner of Blackstock, Rawlings & Cameron to Norwich. When he came up the next Saturday and had made the acquaintance of her father and mother she began to think that perhaps he was really interested in her. She spent the next twenty-four hours in a strange dream of ecstasy; and when he walked home with her

after the evening service she knew that she had found her fate most unexpectedly. As they neared her father's door he had asked her if she were willing to trust her future to him, and she had answered solemnly that she was his whenever he might choose to claim her.

Although she had said this, she was taken aback when he had wished her to be married early in September. She had had to beg to have the wedding postponed till the end of October, assuring him that she could not be ready before then. Now, as she sat there rocking silently in the sitting-room of his house in New York, with a smile of happiness curving her lips, and as she recalled the swiftness of time's flight during the few weeks of her engagement, she did not regret that his neglected business would keep him in town all winter and that the promised trip to Europe was postponed until next summer. They had gone on their brief wedding journey to Niagara and Montreal and Quebec; and they had returned only the day before. Last night for the first time had she sat at the head of his table as the mistress of his house. For the first time that morning had she poured out his coffee in their future home, smiling at him across the broad table in the dingy dining-room with its black horsehair chairs.

Then he had sent for a cab, and he had insisted on her coming down to the office with him. It was the first time that she had seen the immense building

occupied by Blackstock, Rawlings & Cameron, with the packing-cases piled high on the sidewalk and with half a dozen drays unloading the goods just received from Europe. Although two or three of the clerks were looking at him when he got out of the cab, he had kissed her; and although she supposed she must have blushed, she did not really object. She was John's wife now, and it did not matter who knew it. He had called to the driver to come back so that he might tell her to stop anywhere she pleased on her way uptown and to buy anything she fancied. She had come straight home without buying anything, for, of course, she was not going to waste John's money.

All the same the house was very old-fashioned, and it sadly needed to be refurnished. John was rich, and John was generous with his money; and she felt sure he would let her do over the house just as she pleased. Then her thoughts went back to the days when she had been sent to a boarding-school in New York to finish her education and to the afternoon walks when she and the other girls, two by two, had again and again passed in front of that very house; and now it was her home for the rest of her life. It was hers to brighten and to beautify and to make over to suit herself. She did not want to say a word against John's first wife, but it did seem to her that the elder woman had lacked taste at least. The wall-papers and the hangings were all hopeless, and the furniture was simply prehistoric. The drawing-room

looked as though nobody had ever dared to sit in it; and it was so repellent that she did not wonder everybody kept out of it.

Probably his first wife was a plain sort of person who did not care to entertain at all; perhaps she was satisfied with the narrow circle of church work. The young woman remarked how her mind kept on returning to her predecessor. She was ready to confess that this was natural enough, and yet it made her a little impatient nevertheless. Her eyes filled with tears when she thought of the swiftness with which a woman is forgotten when once she is dead.

She went to the window of the sitting-room and looked down on Gramercy Park again. The November twilight was settling down, and the rays of the setting sun were obscured by a heavy bank of gray clouds. The wind had risen and was whirling the dead leaves in erratic circles. Rain was threatened and might come at any minute. The day that had begun in glorious sunshine was about to end in gloom. The young bride was conscious of a vague feeling of loneliness and homesickness; she found herself longing for John's return.

As she turned away she heard the front door close heavily. With the swift hope that her husband might have come home earlier than he had promised, she flew to the head of the stairs. She was in time to see the butler gravely bowing an elderly gentleman into the drawing-room.

Disappointed that it was not John, she went back to the sitting-room and dropped into the rocking-chair by her old desk. She wondered who it was that hastened to call on her the day after her home-coming.

A minute later the butler was standing before her with the salver in his hand and a card on it.

She took it with keen curiosity.

"Dr. Thurston!" she cried. "Did you tell him Mr. Blackstock was not home yet?"

"Yes, m'am," the butler responded; "and he said it was Mrs. Blackstock he wished to see particularly."

"Oh, very well," she returned. "Say I will be down in a minute."

When the butler had gone, she ran to the tall mirror and readjusted her hair once more and felt to make sure that her belt was in position on her lithe young waist. She was glad that she happened to have on a presentable dress, so that she need not keep the minister waiting.

As she slowly went down-stairs she tried in vain to guess why it was that Dr. Thurston wanted to see her particularly. She knew that John had had a pew in Dr. Thurston's church for years and that he was accustomed to give liberally to all its charities. She had heard of the beautiful sermon the doctor had preached when John was left a widower, and so she almost dreaded meeting the minister for the first time all alone. She lost a little of her habitual buoyancy at the fear lest he should not like her.

When she entered the drawing-room—which seemed so ugly in her eyes then that she was ready to apologize for it—the minister greeted her with a reserved smile.

"I trust you will pardon this early visit, Mrs. Blackstock—" he began.

"It is very good of you to come and see me so soon, Dr. Thurston," she interrupted, a little nervously, as she dropped into a chair.

"It is a privilege no less than a duty, my dear young lady," he returned, affably, resuming his own seat, "for me to be one of the first to welcome to her new home the wife of an old friend. There is no man in all my congregation for whom I have a higher regard than I have for John Blackstock."

The young wife did not quite like to have her husband patronized even by the minister of his church, but smiled sweetly as she replied, "It is so kind of you to say that—and I am sure that there is no one whose friendship John values more than he does yours, Doctor."

The minister continued gravely, as though putting this compliment aside. "Yes, I think I have a right to call your husband an old friend. He joined my church only a few months after I was called to New York, and that is nearly fifteen years ago—a large part of a man's life. I have observed him under circumstances of unusual trial, and I can bear witness that he is made of sterling stuff. I was with him when he had to call upon all his fortitude to bear what is per-

haps the hardest blow any man is required to submit to—the unexpected loss of the beloved companion of his youth."

Dr. Thurston paused here; and the bride did not know just what to say. She could not see why the minister should find it necessary to talk to her of the dead woman, who had been in her thoughts all the afternoon.

"Perhaps it may seem strange to you, Mrs. Blackstock," he went on, after an awkward silence, "that I should at this first visit and at this earliest opportunity of speech with you—that I should speak to you of the saintly woman who was John Blackstock's first wife. I trust that you will acquit me of any intention of offending you, and I beg that you will believe that I have mentioned her only because I have a solemn duty before me."

With wide-open eyes the bride sat still before him. She could not understand what these words might mean. When her visitor paused for a moment, all she could say was, "Certainly—certainly," and she would have been greatly puzzled to explain just what it was she wished to convey by the word. A vague apprehension thrilled her, for which she could give no reason.

"I will be brief," the doctor began again. "Perhaps you are aware that the late Mrs. Blackstock died of heart failure?"

The bride nodded and answered, "Yes, yes."

She wanted to say "What of it? And what have I to do with her now? She is dead and gone; and I am alive. Why cannot she leave me alone?"

"But it may be you do not know," Dr. Thurston continued, "that she herself was aware of the nature of her disease? She learned the fatal truth two or three years before she died. She kept it a secret from her husband, and to him she was always cheerful and hopeful. But she made ready for death, not knowing when it might come, but feeling assured that it could not long delay its call. She was a brave woman and a devout Christian; and she could face the future fearlessly. Then, as ever, her first thought was for her husband, and she grieved at leaving him alone and lonely whom she had cared for so many years. If she were to die soon her husband would not be an old man, and perhaps he might take another wife. This suggestion was possibly repugnant to her at first; but in time she became reconciled to it."

The bride was glad to hear this. Somehow this seemed a little to lighten the gloom which had been settling down upon her.

"Then it was that the late Mrs. Blackstock, dwelling upon her husband's second marriage, decided to write a letter to you," and as the minister said this he took an envelope from his coat pocket.

"To me?" cried the young wife, springing to her feet, as though in self-defense. Her first fear was that she was about to learn some dread mystery,

"To you," Dr. Thurston answered calmly—"at least to the woman, whoever she might be, whom John Blackstock should take to wife."

"Why—" began the bride, with a little hysteric laugh, "why, what could she possibly have to say to me?" And her heart was chilled within her.

"That I cannot tell you," the minister answered; "she did not read the letter to me. She brought it to me one dark day the winter before last; and she besought me to take it and to say nothing about it to her husband; and to hand it myself to John Blackstock's new wife whenever they should return from their wedding trip and settle down in this house."

Then Dr. Thurston rose to his feet and tendered her the envelope.

"You want me to read that?" the bride asked, in a hard voice, fearful that the dead hand might be going to snatch at her young happiness.

"I have fulfilled my promise in delivering the letter to you," the minister responded. "But if you ask my advice, I should certainly recommend you to read it. The writer was a good woman, a saintly woman; and whatever the message she has sent you from beyond the grave, as it were, I think it would be well for you to read it."

The young wife took the envelope. "Very well," she answered, "since I must read it, I will."

"I am conscious that this interview cannot but have been somewhat painful to you, Mrs. Black-

stock," said the minister, moving toward the door. "Certainly the situation is strangely unconventional. But I trust you will forgive me for my share in the matter—"

"Forgive you?" she rejoined, finding phrases with difficulty. "Oh yes—yes, I forgive you, of course."

"Then I will bid you good afternoon," he returned.

"Good afternoon," she answered, automatically.

"I beg that you will give my regards to your husband."

"To my husband?" she repeated. "Of course, of course."

When Dr. Thurston had gone at last, the bride stood still in the center of the drawing-room with the envelope gripped in her hand. Taking a long breath, she tore it open with a single motion and took out the half-dozen sheets that were folded within it. She turned it about and shook it suspiciously, but nothing fell from it. This relieved her dread a little, for she feared that there might be some inclosure—something that she would be sorry to have seen.

With the letter in her hand at last, she hesitated no longer; she unfolded it and began to read.

The ink was already faded a little, for the date was nearly two years old. The handwriting was firm but girlishly old-fashioned; it was perfectly legible, however. This is what the bride read:

"My Dear Young Friend,—I must begin by begging your pardon for writing you this letter. I hope you will forgive it as the strange act of a foolish old woman who wants to tell you some of the things her heart is full of.

"You do not know me—at least, I think it most likely you do not, although I cannot be sure of this, for you may be one of the girls I have seen growing up. And I do not know you for sure; but all the same I have been thinking of you very often in the past few weeks. I have thought about you so often that at last I have made up my mind to write you this letter. When I first had the idea, I did not want to, but now I have brooded over it so long that I simply must.

"I have been wondering how you will take it, but I can't help that now. I have something to say, and I am going to say it. I have been wondering, too, what you will be like. I suppose that you are young, very young perhaps, for John has always been fond of young people. You are a good woman, I am sure, for John could never have anything to do with a woman who was not good. Young and good I feel sure you will be; and that is all I know about you.

"I cannot even guess how you have been brought up or what your principles are or your ideas of duty. I wish I could. I am very old-fashioned myself, I find, and so very few young people nowadays seem to have the same opinion about serious things that I have. I

wish I could be sure you were a sincere Christian. I wish I were certain you held fast to the old ideas of duty and self-sacrifice that have been the honor and the glory of the good women of the past. But I have no right to expect that you will think about all these things just as I do. And I know only too well how weak I am myself and how neglectful I have been in improving my own opportunities. The most I can do is to hope that you will do what I have always tried to do ever since I married John—and long before, too—and that is to make him happy and to watch over him.

"If you are very young perhaps you do not yet know that men are not like us women; they need to be taken care of just like children. It is a blessed privilege to be a mother, but a childless wife can at least be a mother to her husband. That is what I have been trying to do all these years. I have tried to watch over John as though he were my only son. Perhaps if our little girl had lived to grow up I might have seen a divided duty before me. But it pleased God to take her to Himself when she was only a baby in arms, and He has never given me another. Many a night I have lain awake with my arms aching to clasp that little body again; but the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord! So I have had nothing to draw me away from my duty to John. If you have children some day—and God grant that you may, for John's heart

is set on a boy—if you have children, don't let your love for them draw you away from John. Remember that he was first in your love, and see that he is last also. He will say nothing, for he is good and generous; but he is quick to see neglect, and it would be bitter if he were left alone in his old age.

"You will find out in time that he is very sensitive, for all he is a man and does not complain all the time. So be cheerful always, as it annoys him to see anybody in pain or suffering in any way. It is a great comfort to me now that the disease that is going to take me away from him sooner or later, I cannot know when—that it is sudden and not disfiguring, and that he need not know anything at all about it until it is all over. I have made the doctor promise not to tell him till I am dead.

"You see, John has his worries down-town—not so many now as he used to have, I am thankful to say; and I have tried always to make his home bright for him so that he could forget unpleasant things. I hope you will always do that, too; it is a wife's duty, I think. You will forgive my telling you these things, won't you? You see I am so much older than you are, and I have known John for so many years. I have found that it relieves his feelings sometimes to tell me his troubles and to talk over things with me. Of course, I don't know much about business, and I suppose that what I say is of no value; but it soothes him to have sympathy. So I hope

you will never be impatient when he wants to tell you about his partners and the clerks and things of that sort. I have seen women foolish enough not to want to listen when their husbands talked about business. I do hope that you are wiser, or, at any rate, that you will take advice from an old woman like me, thinking only of the happiness of the man you have promised to love, honor, and obey. You will learn in time how good John is. Perhaps you may think you know now—but you can't know that as well as I do.

"You see I am older than John—not so much older, either, only a little more than two years. He doesn't like me to admit it, but it is true; and of late I have been afraid that everybody could see it, for I am past forty now and I feel very old sometimes, while John is as young as ever. He looks just as he did twenty years ago; he has not a gray hair in his head yet. He comes up-stairs to me, after he gets back from the office, with the same boyish step I know so well.

"He was only a boy when I first saw him in the little village school-house. His family had just moved into our neighborhood, and the school he had been to before was not very good, and so I was able to help him with his lessons. The memory of that first winter when we were boy and girl together has always been very precious to me; and I can see him now as he used to come into the school, panting with his hard run to get there in time.

"I don't know when it was that I began to love

him, but it was long before he had grown to be a man. That early love of mine gave me many a sorrowful hour in those days, for there were other girls who saw how handsome John was. One girl there was he used to say was pretty, but I never could see it, for she had red hair and freckles—but perhaps John said this to tease me, for he was always fond of a joke. This girl made up to him, and John came near marrying her; but fortunately a new minister came to town and she gave up John and took him. So John came back to me, and that spring we were married.

"John was not rich then; he had his way to make, but when an old family friend offered him a place in New York City he hesitated. He did not want to take me away from my mother; he has always been so good to me. But mother would not hear of it; and so we came to this big city, and John succeeded from the very first. It was not ten years before he was taken into the firm; and now for two years he has been at the head of it. I doubt if there is another man as young as he is in all New York at the head of so large a business.

"When we first came to New York we boarded; and then after a while we found a little house in Grove Street. It was there baby was born and there she died; and perhaps that is why I was so ungrateful as to be sorry when John bought this big house here on Gramercy Park. He said he wanted his wife to have

as good a house as anybody else. Of course, I ought to have known that a man of John's prominence could not go on living in Grove Street; he had to take his position in the world. He let me have my own way about furnishing this house, although he did pretend to scold me for not spending enough money. I have been very happy here, although I will not say that I have never regretted the little house where my only child died; but, of course, I never told this to John, and it has always pleased me to see the pride he took in this handsome house. And now in a few weeks or a few months I shall leave it forever, and I leave him also.

"But I must not talk about myself any more. It is about John I wanted to speak. I meant to tell you how good he is and how he deserves to be loved with your whole heart. I intended to ask you to take care of him as I have tried to do, to watch over him, to comfort him, to sympathize with him, to be truly his helpmate.

"Especially must you watch over him, for he will not take care of himself. For instance, he is so busy all day that he will forget to eat any luncheon unless you keep at him; and if he goes without his lunch sometimes he has bad attacks of indigestion. And even when it is raining he does not always think to take his overshoes or even his umbrella; and he ought to be particular, because he is threatened with rheumatism. If he has a cold, send for Dr. Cheever

SHE FLUNG HERSELF INTO HIS ARMS

at once, and John seems to catch cold very easily; once, three years ago, he came near having pneumonia. You must see that he changes his flannels early in the fall; he will never do it unless you get them out for him. You will have to look after him as if he were a baby; and that is one reason why I am writing this long, long letter, just to tell you what you will have to do.

"Perhaps I had another reason, too—the joy I take always in talking about him and in praising him and in telling how good he is. I hope he has been happy with me all these years, and I know I have been very happy with him. It may be very fanciful in me, but I like the idea that these words of mine praising him will be read after my death. If you love him, as I hope you do, with your whole heart and soul, you will understand why I have written this and you will forgive me.

"Yours sincerely,

"SARAH BLACKSTOCK."

Before the young bride had read the half of this unexpected communication her eyes had filled with tears, and when she came to the end her face was wet.

She stood silently in the center of the room where the minister had left her, and she held the open sheets of the letter in her hand. Then the front door was closed with a jar to be felt all over the house; and in

a moment she had heard her husband's footsteps in the hall.

"John!" she cried.

When he came to the door she flung herself into his arms, sobbing helplessly.

"Oh, John," she managed to say, at last. "Your first wife was an angel! I don't believe I can ever be as good as she was. But you will love me too—won't you, dear?"

(1897)

The Shortest
Day in the Year

THE snow was still falling steadily, although it had already thickly carpeted the avenue. It was a soft, gentle snow, sifting down calmly and clinging moistly to the bare branches of the feeble trees, which stood out starkly sheathed in white, spectral in the grayness of the late afternoon. Gangs of men were clearing the cross-paths at the corners and shoveling the sodden drifts into carts of various sizes, impressed into sudden service. It was not yet dusk, but the street-lamps had been lighted; and the tall hotel almost opposite was already illuminated here and there by squares of yellow.

Elinor stood at the window of her aunt's house, gazing out, and yet not seeing the occasional carriages and the frequent automobiles that filled the broad avenue before her. The Christmas wreath that hung just over her head was scarcely more motionless than she was, as she stared straight before her, unconscious of anything but the deadness of her own outlook on life.

She looked very handsome in her large hat and her black furs, which set off the pallor of her face, relieved by the deep eyes, now a little sunken, and with a dark

line beneath them. She took no notice of the laborers as they stood aside to allow her aunt's comfortable carriage to draw up before the door. She did not observe the laughing children at an upper window of the house exactly opposite, highly excited at the vision of a huge Christmas tree which towered aloft in a cart before the door. She was waiting for Aunt Cordelia to take her to a tea, and then to a studio, where her portrait was to be shown to a few of her friends.

Her thoughts were not on any of these things; they were far away from wintry New York. Her thoughts were centered on the new-made grave in distant Panama, in which they had buried the man she loved less than a week ago.

And it was just a year ago to-day, on the twenty-second of December, the shortest day in the year, that she had promised to be his wife. Only a year—and it seemed to her that those twelve months had made up most of her life. What were the score of years that had gone before in comparison with the richness of those happy twelve months, when life had at last seemed worth while?

As a girl she had wondered sometimes what life was for, and why men and women had been sent on this earth. What was the purpose of it all? But this question had never arisen again since she had met him; or, rather, it had been answered, once for all. Life was love; that was plain enough to her. At

last her life had taken on significance, since she had yielded herself to his first kiss, and since the depth of her own passion had been revealed to her swiftly and unexpectedly.

As she looked back at his unexpected appeal to her, and as she remembered that when he had told her his love and asked her to be his they had met only ten days before and had spoken to each other less than half a dozen times, she realized that it was her fate which had brought them together. Although she did not know it, she had been waiting for him, as he had been waiting for her. She was his mate, and he was hers, chosen out of all others—a choice foreordained through all eternity.

Their wooing was a precious secret, shared by no one else. They knew it themselves, and that was enough; and perhaps the enforced mystery made the compact all the sweeter. Ever since they had plighted their troth she had gone about with joy in her heart and with her head in a heaven of hope, hardly aware that she was touching the earth. All things were glad around her; and a secret song of happiness was forever caroling in her ears.

And yet she knew that it might be years before he could claim her, for he was only now beginning his professional career as an engineer. He had just been appointed to a good place on the canal. His chief was encouraging, and put responsibilities on him; he had felt sure that he would have a chance to show

what he could do. And she had been almost angry how any one could ever doubt that he would rise to the head of his profession. She had told him that she would wait seven years, and twice seven years, if need be.

Aunt Cordelia was hoping that she would make a splendid match. Within a week after John Grant had said good-by she had rejected Reggie Eames, whom her aunt had been encouraging for a year or two. She liked Reggie well enough; he was a good fellow. When he had asked her if there was another suitor standing in his way, she had looked him in the face and told him that there was; and Reggie had taken it like a man, and had made a point of being nice to her ever since, whenever they met in society.

As she stood there at the window she gave a slight start and nodded pleasantly to Reggie, who had bowed as he passed the house on the way to the Union Club. And then the avenue, with all its passers-by, its carriages and automobiles, its shoveling laborers and its falling snow, its Christmas greens and its lighted windows, faded again from her vision, as she tried to imagine that unseen grave far away in Panama.

She wished that she could have been with him—that they could have had those last few hours together. She had had so little of him, after all. An unexpected summons had come to him less than a week after they were engaged; and he had gone at

once. Of course, he had written by every steamer, but what were letters when she was longing for the clasp of his arms? And every month, on the twenty-second, there had come a bunch of violets, with the single word "Sweetheart." He had laughed when he told her that the twenty-second of December was the shortest day in the year—which was not very promising if they expected to be "as happy as the day is long"!

The months had gone, one after another; she had not seen him again; and now she would never see him again. He had been hoping for leave of absence early in the spring; and she had been looking forward to it. He had written that he did not know how the work would get along without him, but he did know that he could not get along without her. Hereafter she would have to get along without him; and she had never longed for him so much, wanted him, needed him.

The long years to come stretched out before her vision, as she stood there in the window, lovely in her youthful beauty; and she knew that for her they would be desolate, barren, and empty years. The flame of love burned within her as fiercely as ever; but there was now nothing for it to feed on but a memory; yet the fire was hot in its ashes.

She opened her heavy furs, for she felt as if they were stifling her. She knew that they had been admired by her friends, and even envied by some of

them. Aunt Cordelia had given them to her for Christmas, insisting on her wearing them as soon as they came home, since they were so becoming.

Aunt Cordelia meant to be kind; she had always meant to be kind, ever since Elinor had come to her as an orphan of ten. Her kindness was a little exacting at times; and her narrow matrimonial ambitions Elinor could not help despising. What did it profit a girl to make a splendid match, if she did not marry the one man she was destined to love?

The furs were beautiful, and they were costly. Were they the price of her freedom? Was it due to these expensive things she did not really want that she had not been able to take John Grant for her husband a month or a week after he had asked her?

Everything in this world had to be paid for; and perhaps she had sold her liberty too cheap. If it had not been for the furs, and for all the other things that her aunt had accustomed her to, she might have gone with him to Panama and nursed him when he fell ill. She felt sure that she could have saved him. She would have tried so hard! She would have put her soul into it. Her soul? She felt as if the sorrow of the past week had made her acquainted with her own soul for the first time. And she confessed herself to be useless and feeble and weak.

That was what made it all so strange. Why could she not have died in his place? Why could not she have died for him? She had lived, really lived, only

since she had known him; and it was only since he had gone that she had known herself. She had meant to help him—not that he needed any assistance from anybody. Now she could help no one in all the wide world. She was useless again—a girl, ignorant and helpless.

Why could she not have been taken, and why could not he have been spared? He had a career before him; he would have been able to do things—strong things, brave things, noble things, delicate things. And he was gone before he had been able to do anything, with all his possibilities of honor and fame, with all his high hope of honest, hard work in the years of his manly youth, with everything cut short, just as if a candle had been blown out by a chance wind.

She marveled how it was that she had been able to live through the long days since she had read the brief announcement of his death. She did not see how it was that she had not cried out, how it was that she had not shouted aloud the news of her bereavement. She supposed it must be because she had inherited self-control, because she had been trained to keep her feelings to herself, and never to make a scene.

Fortunately she was alone when she learned that he was dead. She had been up late at a ball the night before, and, as usual, Aunt Cordelia had insisted on her staying in bed all the morning to rest.

When she had finished her chocolate, Aunt Cordelia had brought in the morning paper, and had raised the window-shade for her to read, before going down for a long talk with the lawyer who managed their affairs.

Elinor had glanced over the society reporter's account of the ball and his description of her own gown; she had read the announcement of the engagement of a girl she knew to a foreign count; and then she was putting the paper down carelessly when her eye caught the word "Panama" at the top of a paragraph. Then, at a flash, she had read the inconspicuous paragraph which told how John Grant, a very promising young engineer in charge of a section of the work on the canal, had died suddenly of pneumonia, after only two days' illness, to the great grief of all his associates, especially of the chief, who had thought very highly of him.

The words danced before her eyes in letters of fire; and she felt as if an icy hand had clutched her heart. She was as stunned as if the end of the world had come; and it was the end of her world.

She did not recall how long she had held the paper clutched in her hand; and she did not know why she had not wept. It seemed to her as if her tears would be a profanation of her grief, too deep to be washed away by weeping. She had not cried once. Perhaps it would have been a relief if she could have had a good cry, petty and pitiful as it would be.

When Aunt Cordelia had called her, at last, to get ready for luncheon, she had arisen as if she had been somebody else. She had dressed and gone downstairs and sat opposite her aunt and chatted about the ball. She recalled that her aunt had said that there was nothing in the paper that morning except the account of the ball. Nothing in the paper! She had kept her peace, and made no confession. It seemed to her that it could not have been herself who sat there calmly and listened and responded. It seemed as if she was not herself, but another girl—a girl she did not know before.

So the days had gone, one after another, and so they would continue to go in the future. She was young, and she came of a sturdy stock; she might live to be three-score and ten.

As she stood there at the window, staring straight before her, she saw herself slowly changing into an old maid like Aunt Cordelia, well meaning and a little fidgety, a little fussy, and quite useless. She recoiled as she surveyed the long vista of time, with no husband to take her into his arms, and with no children for her to hold up to him when he came back from his work. And she knew that she was fit to be a wife and a mother; and now she would never be either.

What was there left for her to do in life? She could not go into a convent, and she could not study to be a trained nurse. There she was at twenty-one,

a broken piece of driftwood washed up on an unknown island. She had no hope any more; the light of her life had gone out.

She asked herself whether she had any duty toward others—duty which would make life worth living once more. She wished that there was something for her to do; but she saw nothing. She set her teeth and resolved that she would go through life, whatever it might bring, and master it for his sake, as he would have expected her to do. He was dead, and lying alone in that distant, lonely grave; and she would have to live on and on—but at least she would live as he would approve.

But whatever her life might be, it would not be easy without him. She had lived on his letters; and she had taken a new breath of life every month when his violets came. And now nothing would come any more—no message, no little words of love, nothing to cheer her and to sustain her. Never before had she longed so much for a message from him—a line only—a single word of farewell.

It was again the shortest day of the year, and it was to her the longest of all her life. But all the days would be long hereafter, and the nights would be long, and life would be long; and all would be empty, since he would never again be able to communicate with her. If only she believed in spiritualism, if only she could have even the dimmest hope that some

day, somehow, some sort of communication might come to her from him, from the shadowy realm where he had gone, and where she could not go until the summons came to join him!

So intent was she upon her own thoughts that she did not hear the ring of the door-bell; and a minute later she started when the butler entered the room with a small parcel in his hand.

"What is it, Dexter?" she asked, mechanically.

"This has just come for you, Miss," he answered, handing her the parcel.

She held it without looking at it until Dexter had left the room. Probably it was a Christmas present from one of her friends; and she loosened the strings listlessly.

It was a box from a florist; and she wondered who could have sent her any flowers on the day sacred to him. It might be Reggie, of course; but he had not done that for nearly a year now.

She opened the box carelessly, and found a bunch of violets. There was a card with it.

She took it nearer to the window, to read it in the fading light. It bore the single word, "Sweetheart."

She stood for a moment, silent and trembling.

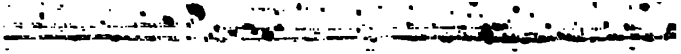
"John!" she cried aloud. "From you!"

She sank into a chair, with the violets pressed

against her heart, sobbing; and the tears came at last, plentifully.

Then she heard footsteps on the stairs; and in a moment more her aunt was standing at the door and calling:

"Elinor, are you ready? We are late."

(1910)

THE END